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By

J. LEWIS MAY

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By
J. LEWIS MAY

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AND that night . . . a dream of that place came to Florian, a dream which did for him the office of the finer sort of memory, bringing its object to the mind with a great clearness, yet, as sometimes happens in dreams, raised a little above itself, and above ordinary retrospect.

WALTER PATER, *The Child in the House*.

BY WAY OF PREFACE

|| ONCE heard, or read, a story of how a man went one morning into a great church, during a fog so dense and so dark as almost to turn day into night, and how, on entering the building, he was amazed to find it filled with brilliant sunshine.

It seemed for a moment like a miracle; yet the explanation was simple. The fog hung close to the earth, like a pall, but the clerestory windows were high above the gloom, and through them, from a cloudless sky, shone the sun, flooding the lofty, silent spaces—nave and transepts and sanctuary—with a kind of mystic glory

Something like this, as vivid and as startling, happened long ago to me. I had risen early one still summer morning and unmoored the boat in which I used to explore the secrets of the river—*my* river as I like to call it, because I knew it, every navigable inch of it, and loved

it when I was a child, and love it still, with a love that is sadder, but assuredly no less ardent. The tide, an unusually high one, was just past the full, and a heavy sea-mist hung motionless over the wide expanse of waters. I was out in mid-stream, when, all at once, I became aware of muffled voices close to me in the fog. Suddenly, as I grasped my paddles, ready to pull this way or that, as need might be, the fog was riven by a shaft of sunlight that shone sheer down upon a barque with all her white sails set, slipping slowly seawards on the ebbing tide. I pulled a stroke or two to get clear, and watched her as she passed, silent and stately, like a thing transfigured. The vision was but momentary. A few seconds and the mist had closed round her again, and the creaking cordage and the sound of voices grew fainter and more faint, till at last they died away into silence.

Often seemingly trivial and accidental things like this, especially if they happen to us when we are very young, have a strange but indefinable influence on our hearts, and so upon our lives ; fixing in our minds for ever, as it were, a standard or canon of beauty. I have always felt that the vision of that sunlit ship stealing upon me so mysteriously with her tall masts and spreading sails, and disappearing again as suddenly into the mist, was a symbol, a sign, but of what, precisely, I cannot tell, nor perhaps shall ever fully know.

In these long winter evenings I have pleased

myself by calling out of the past the phantoms of certain places and people that I loved long since. Alas, memory is a capricious thing, and will not work to order; but sometimes the slightest chance—a wandering scent, or a bar of half-forgotten music, or the lapping of water among the reeds, or the night wind whispering about the eaves, or the firelight flickering on the ceiling at dusk, and many a sensation more elusive, less definite, than these—will serve to waken the slumbers of a beloved ghost, and clothe with living light the lineaments no conscious effort could restore.

As they came into my mind—these memories—so have I set them down, without artifice or embellishment; nor have I attempted any arrangement of them save a roughly chronological one.

Perhaps I ought to say, by way of explanation, to such as may do me the honour to read these pages, that I was born in London of Devonshire parents, that my father was a doctor in practice in a northern suburb, that I went first to a dame's school and then to a big public day school in the metropolis, and that I used to spend my school holidays at my great-uncle's, a widower who with his three maiden sisters lived in an old house in a once famous seaport in North Devon. One of these great-aunts we called "Aunt Mo," which is a curious name for an aunt and, indeed, for anybody. Her real name was Mary, but when my father was very little, "Mo" was

the nearest his infant tongue could get to Mary, so Aunt Mo she became and Aunt Mo she remained. It was a dear and friendly little name, and served to distinguish her from another aunt, my father's sister, whose name was Mary, too.

And now, dear reader, if you do not love these friends of mine—places and people—as I myself love them, blame not them, nor yourself, but me, who lack the skill to make you see them as they were, and as I see them still.

J. L. M.

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I. DEVON

THE OLD BRIDGE

TIME has dealt gently with this old town. It has laid no cruel disfiguring hand upon it. Not, indeed, that it has wholly escaped those inevitable changes which men miscall improvements, or developments. They have come, these changes, yet they have not sensibly marred its beauty, and the image of it, mirrored in the waters beside which it dreams its immemorial dreams, is still lovely and gracious. But it is not so quiet as in the old days. It is not so easy now to catch, across the "wastes of Time," the faint and far-off voices of the Past, the

. . . musical and melancholy chime,
Which they can hear who meddle not with crime,
Nor avarice, nor over-anxious care.

There is more noise and bustle; its narrow streets and byways are too often invaded by an alien throng, and the sound of the motor-horn scares away the timid ghosts. They must needs

wait now for night and the silence, ere they venture abroad.

When first I knew it, as a child, there were few sounds to be heard there save the whisper of the winds and the tides, the cry of the curlew, the voices of sailors hauling on their ropes, as they moored or unmoored their little vessels beside the then unwidened quay. Sweet and gracious sounds, they did not drown the music of Old Triton's horn, neither they nor the leisurely "clop-clop" of horses' hoofs, waking the echoes of the narrow cobbled streets, nor the noise of saw and mallet in the ship-building yard, where they used to build such sturdy little fishing-boats and coasting vessels. Silence and desolation are upon those shipyards now; a tangle of grass and weeds encumbers the slips down which the little craft would slide and gracefully take the water. And in the sheds and workshops, given over long since to the bats and spiders, silence and desolation! And the Rope Walk—that too has vanished, and it was sore to lose it. It was hardly to be believed that the old town could survive the ripping out of so integral, so essential, a part of it. Yet now, a whole generation has grown up, bearded men and marriageable maidens, in whose minds the Rope Walk is not even a memory.

My uncle's house looked out upon the "Strand," a stretch of level road, not paved or macadamised, but strewn with small clean gravel-stones. This piece of road—it was semi-private

and more like a school playground than a road—was about three hundred yards long and, I should think, fifty yards wide. At our end of the Strand was the entrance to what I suppose I must now prosaically call a long low-roofed brick shed ; but in those days it seemed to me as mysterious as the cave of Trophonius. This was the Rope Walk, and thence, out of its cavernous mouth, there was wont to issue, together with a fine smell of pitch, first a plodding, patient horse, then a kind of wooden platform or land-going raft, on which stood two men, bearded and brawny, perpetually revolving a species of crank or shaft from which, by some mysterious means, they spun, or seemed to spin, as a spider spins its gossamer threads, an ever-lengthening tress of golden cable.

Doubtless it is not thus that ropes are made nowadays, and the Rope Walk has disappeared and left no trace, having given place to a collar factory that throbs and trembles with monstrous reverberations to the clank and rumbling of its steam-driven machinery. Above the entrance to the old Rope Walk, into which I would sometimes venture with a thrill of delicious terror, there dwelt the owner of the business, who possessed, as was fitting for one who presided over such enthralling mysteries, a name unique in my experience. He was called Restarick, and was much respected in the town. The Rope Walk, then, has gone—gone with the great tall ships, “ their white sails crowding,”

—its spirit and theirs gathered to that viewless haven within whose sheltering arms they dwell, their earthly labours done, with all forgotten, obsolete, beautiful things.

There have been changes in the town. The “besom of progress” has been at work here, and yet I fancy if Amyas Leigh came sailing up on the brimming tide, winding his horn as he hove in sight of the woods of Burrough, he would find but little to disconcert him. A sprinkling of modern villas East-the-Water, and the salt marshes to the west of the river-bank drained and turned into a park and grounds for games and athletic exercises—these he would see, and especially would he notice, behind the “peaceful citadel” which crowns the eastern hill, a lonely granite cross. The benignant deities who guide the deliberations of the town-council decreed that this beautiful memorial, austere and remote, alone on its high hill with the winds and the sun and the rain, should stand as the mute remembrancer of the men who fought and died for their country in the Great War. But the bridge, the pride and glory of the town, is there. Its beloved countenance has not been marred. No ruthless hand has torn away the memories that cling about its storied arches. And as you lean upon its parapet, gazing down to where the waters widen to the sea or up-stream towards the wood-crowned hills, the soul, the spirit of the bridge is with you still.

For six hundred years, successive generations

have gone and come across this venerable bridge. It has heard the hoof of the pack-horse, the creak of the farm-wain, the rattle of the stage-coach ; it has echoed to the tramp of soldiery as long ago as the struggle of Cavalier and Round-head and as recently as the Great War. Twice a day for six hundred years it has felt the swirl of the swift salt tides that bear the wrack and foam of the ocean far inland among the silent hills, where the trees come down to the river's edge and the kingfisher flits like a blue flame in the shadow of their overhanging branches. For six hundred mellowing years it has felt the caress of the sea-winds, and listened, in the stillness of the night, to the sound—faint and far-off as the sighing of a shell—of the billows whitening over the treacherous bar.

It is sweet and pleasant to lie awake at night and listen to the tide sweeping in from the sea, creeping with an edge of white foam over the stretches of level sand, or drawing down again from the hills, with a soft silvery ripple. For six hundred years they have been lovers, the tide and the bridge, and whispered secrets familiarly to each other. And the river has wonderful things to tell—tales of the great tumbling main with its countless billows that break and foam, and break and foam, eternally ; of salt marshes where the curlews call, of rocky caves, of moon-silvered creeks and inlets, of low sand-dunes where the sea-winds whistle shrilly among the grey-green reeds, of waves

seething over hidden reefs. Or flowing seaward again, it will discourse, "with a sweet inland murmur," of waving woods that crown its precipitous banks, of rich flower-sprinkled meadows, of red cattle standing knee-deep in the long lush grass, of dappled trout gleaming in its sunlit waters, of the bare solitary gorse-clad heath, its moorland home.

But what a vain thing it is I have been attempting. This town, its old houses, the cobbles of the streets and, above all, the bridge and the waters flowing through its many arches—I have been trying to tell you what these things say to me. Why, I cannot even tell myself—in words. I only know that whatever it is, it is something mysteriously and inalienably part of me, something tender and sad—and incommunicable. To you, unless indeed you were a child there too, and loved and were beloved there, it is just—as the guide-books might say—"a picturesque old town, rich in historic associations."

THE AUNTS

LOOKING in at the shop window of a dealer in antiques to-day, my eye lighted on an old tea-and-breakfast service. It was the colour of old ivory, with a deep, broad band of richest crimson encircling the plates and the cups and saucers, and round the outer rim of them a thin line of gold. Though I could not purchase it, I was grateful to the dealer for exposing that set in his window, because it made me think of Aunt Ellen. She has been dead this many a year, yet the sight of that red-bordered china in that noisy London street brought her back with extraordinary vividness to my mind. The mists of time melted away, and once again I saw her in her habit as she lived.

I cannot think of Aunt Ellen without also thinking of Aunt Mary and Aunt Elizabeth. They were really my great-aunts, but that does not matter. I always used to say "Aunt Mary"

and "Aunt Ellen," as my father did. Aunt Elizabeth was the eldest; she was indeed very old, and in those days, if anyone had told me she was a hundred and fifty, I should not have been the least surprised. She was so bowed down with age that, as she leaned on her stick, her body formed a right-angle. She never came downstairs, but sat all day in an invalid chair in the drawing-room, which was on the first floor, her head draped in a shawl of beautiful lace, and all day long she would read the Scriptures, of which she possessed an alarming knowledge.

It was part of the ritual I had to observe, when staying in the house, to go into the drawing-room as soon as breakfast and family prayers were over, to say "good-morning" to Aunt Elizabeth. She would invariably ask me a question on some detail of biblical history, such, for example, as "How many sheep had Job?" If, "hazarding a wide solution," as Sir Thomas Browne has it, I came luckily off, I was rewarded with a tract, of which she had a formidable supply. There were tracts printed on paper of all manner of tints—blue tracts, white tracts, pink tracts, green tracts. . . . Alas, my answers being usually wide of the mark, the stock was in no danger of serious depletion at my hands. My acquaintance with Holy Writ was not conspicuous for its verbal and detailed exactitude. And, if the tide was up, and the sunlight dancing on the waters, I

would answer at random, burning to be out on my beloved river.

Aunt Elizabeth and her two sisters had been brought up in the Church of England, but, early in their career, when Aunt Elizabeth was quite a young woman, and Aunt Mary and Aunt Ellen little more than girls, they were won over by a preacher, one Chapman by name, to the sect of the Plymouth Brethren. And so, in all the bloom of their radiant girlhood, they bade farewell to the pomps and vanities of this world and dedicated themselves to the service of God and His poor; and of the yoke they thus took upon themselves they never grew weary.

They were indeed three saints. But they were saints with a difference. Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Mary were saints, but they *knew* that they were saints. Aunt Ellen was a saint, but she did *not* know it, and so there was an attractiveness, a warmth, a homely, human quality about Aunt Ellen's sanctity, that was a great comfort to sinners like myself. There were other reasons why I loved Aunt Ellen best, and one of them was her attitude to the Murphy affair. Murphy, one of the "conscript fathers" of the town, and by trade a photographer—there is something a trifle irresponsible about such a calling—this Murphy, having become early inebriated at a Corporation banquet, had disgraced himself by making unseemly jests at the expense of some of his fellow burghers. At length, his pranks getting too broad to bear with, my Uncle William,

having warned him in vain, took him by the scruff of the neck and forcibly propelled him into outer darkness.

Aunt Ellen would tell this story, and at the end of it say, in tones of reproof, "But he ought not to have done it, you know, my dear; he never ought to have done it." Yet I have reason to believe that, though she would never have admitted it, even to herself, she was secretly proud of her brother's exploit. But there was another thing that made me more at home with Aunt Ellen than with either Aunt Elizabeth or Aunt Mary. Aunt Ellen presided over the kitchen; she not only directed the activities that went on within that hallowed domain, she took an active part in them. Thus, while Aunt Elizabeth prayed for the poor, and while Aunt Mary visited them in their homes, it was Aunt Ellen who fed them. Every morning the "poor bodies" would come and sit in a row, sometimes as many as a dozen or fifteen, on a long form in the hall, and not one would go away empty-handed. Nor, when three-fifths of their income were swallowed up in the *Liberator* smash, did they make the smallest difference in what they gave away. But cheerfully, without the shadow of a complaint, they went about their Master's business, and I make no doubt they prayed for Jabez Balfour.

I can tell you something else about Aunt Ellen. What manner of discipline Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Mary had laid upon themselves in the matter

of the affections I know not, but when she was young, Aunt Ellen, who was very pretty, with golden side-curlys and blue eyes, as you may see in a miniature I have of her—Aunt Ellen, I say, had a wooer who, because she had put aside all thoughts of marriage, was fated to press his suit in vain. He never wavered in his devotion to her, and when he was a white-haired old man and her golden ringlets too had turned to silver, Colonel W—— would call and bring her flowers, and sitting beside her lay a trembling hand on hers. And Aunt Ellen would turn aside her head and smile a little wistfully and, I think, her eyes had a mist in them.

Ah, little Aunt Ellen, what would I not give to see you now, with your side curlys and your merry little face, and wearing the little blue-and-white chequered apron you used to put on in the kitchen of a morning! How vividly I remember you, and the beautiful old china of which you were so proud, and the glass, and the dark-panelled dining-room, and the blue broad waters of the river bringing in with it “murmurs and scents of the infinite sea.”

THE JOURNEY TO THE SEA

I SAID just now that this old seaport of mine is not so peaceful as it used to be. But another change has come upon it. It used to stand on the edge of the world, and to reach it was an enterprise for heroes ; like setting sail for the Islands of the Blessed. But the world has shrunk, and what was once a high adventure is now but a commonplace.

Men say beyond the western seas
The Happy Isles no longer glow ;
No sailors sight Hesperides,
All that was long ago.

But in those days, in the middle eighties, how shall I describe the thrill that shook our childish bosoms as we took our places aboard the "growler," which, if the gods so willed, was to convey us to Waterloo, that gateway to the Land of Promise.

I, being of tender age, had to sit within the cab, under the parental eye, clasping my spade and bucket, my feet scarce touching the straw which—in place of carpet—covered the narrow floor-space of that enchanted vehicle. My elder brother, home from boarding school, manned the seat alongside the driver, his duty—for the position, though exalted, was no sinecure—being, whenever the lurching of the conveyance so demanded, to lay a steadying hand upon my father's velocipede (so my father insisted on calling it), lest, like Samson bursting his bonds, the monstrous thing should break loose from the ligatures which precariously attached it to the roof-rail, and precipitate its complex mechanism of chains and wheels and levers into the road below.

In course of time—but after what perils of collision from which our driver, who curbed his steed more tightly than his tongue (though his tongue had the greater need of it), extricated us as by a series of miracles!—we “made” Waterloo, which, in those days, was far from being the spacious temple with which the present generation is familiar. What is now a rite, conducted with almost hieratic dignity and solemnity, was then a riot, a scrimmage, a series of breathless excursions from this platform to that, of questions hurled at fleeting porters who flung you a reply that was drowned in the general uproar.

At last, however, it was found—the compart-

ment whose opposing sides, sloping slightly inwards from the perpendicular—(so at least it seemed to me), constrained you to bend forward as in a posture of perpetual prayer; the compartment within whose exiguous compass you were to spend six, maybe eight, hours (who cared?) of delicious thralldom. On and over the maze of crowded streets, above the very chimney-pots, out into the clear, clean country we rolled, where breathed “an ampler ether, a diviner air.”

At length the train began to slow down. We were nearing Salisbury; but not until the Cathedral spire had been duly observed and admired—a sort of grace before meat—did we make the first inroad on those stores of strange nutriment, on which, with scarce an intermission, we continued to feast for the rest of the journey. At length, when the sun had begun to “slope his westerling wheel,” came Exeter (“Agztur” as the porters called it). There, noting well the number of our carriage, and its bearings with respect to some conspicuous landmark on the platform,—bookstall, perhaps, or buffet—my father would clasp my hand in his, and together we would race along the platform “like guilty things upon a fearful summons”—for there were no corridor trains in that simple age. Then, if there were time, a hurried draught of most astringent tea, and back again to our carriage where we should find my mother peering out of the window, a grey silk veil tied round her

hat, anxiously endeavouring to distinguish us amid the struggling throng.

After Exeter came a long succession of village stations, glimpses of precipitous hills, deep valleys, tumbling rivers, ivy-clad bridges, waving woods. And then the hills would grow barer, with softer outlines. The river widened suddenly, showing broad stretches of sand or mud intersected at intervals by little tributary rivulets. A keener wind, with a salt, sharp savour, blew in through the lowered window, fluttering my mother's veil, till at last, where two rivers meet to flow together towards the sunset, you looked westwards, as through a casement opening on eternity, and lo, the sea!

On leaving the train, you had the choice of two ways of reaching the Aunts' house. You could walk, or you could take the omnibus. If you were in a hurry, you walked. If not, the omnibus, which was lined with a sort of glazed linen with a pattern of tiny stars, and looked like the inside of a big trunk, would take you a very pleasant ride of three-quarters of an hour round the town, dropping luggage and passengers on its way, till it finally deposited you at your destined door. In spite of my eagerness to see the Aunts and the red-bordered china and to feast on the saffron cakes and the cream, I usually elected to go with the bus and the luggage. For one thing Tom Stanbury and I were old friends. Tom had been ostler ("ohstler" he called it) for years at "The Commercial." Then,

because his joints grew stiff, they put him on to bus work. "Aye, sir," he used to observe with cheerful resignation, "I've lost me missus, me daughter's married, and me son's up to London. I've no one left now but the 'osses."

Such was the journey to the sea when I was a child. But now, somehow, with all the added speed and comfort, the rapture of the thing has departed. To-day you can while away nearly half the time, comfortably seated in the restaurant car, over a lunch of several courses ; and almost before you've settled down again to your paper or your book, the porters are calling out Bideford ! Bideford ! There was a time when a hard-boiled egg dabbed on a pinch of salt in a screw of paper, and a draught of milk the train had nearly jolted into cheese, were the food and drink of the gods. . . .

PERILOUS SEAS

I THINK I could not have been more than five, and my father was staying with me at my great-aunts'. One morning it was arranged that we should sail down the river to Appledore, and perhaps—if it was not too rough—out over the bar into the Bay. The party, then, consisted of my father (who sailed the boat) and myself, two or three others—who they were I cannot quite remember—and my cousin A——. She was my cousin by marriage, and, at that time, little more than twenty. With her dark imperious hair, her lovely eyes, her rather pale face and lissome figure, she was a most attractive young woman.

The breeze was a spanking one, and no sooner were we under way than, what with the boat heeling over, the water seething along almost level with the gunwale on the leeward side, and the ominous “chuff-chuff” of the bows as they plunged into the white-crested waves, I began

to feel very considerably alarmed; and, my powers of speech being limited, I gave utterance to my terrors by howling loudly and continuously like a stricken animal, to the great annoyance of the other members of the party. My father with his hand on the tiller looked sternly at me; some of the others told me roundly not to be a naughty little boy and to stop crying at once—but all to no avail. I was terrified beyond measure, and my yells would have been heard above the wildest storm. And then a miracle happened! My cousin turned towards me, and looked at me. She stretched out both her arms and gently gathered me to her bosom. With one hand she held me fast in that delicious haven, with the other she wiped away my tears. I would have affronted a tornado for the luxury of that caress. Why, I can remember the very dress she had on—a simple blue frock with white spots—and I can still feel her arm about me!

MY BOATMEN—AND ANOTHER

WHICH of my boatmen did I love best, Cap'n Dark or Mr. Rooke? It is hard to say. Cap'n Dark passed for a good man, and a good man I think he really was. His goodness was of the intense, almost ferocious, kind one usually finds in converts. For the "Cap'n" was a convert. He had been a transgressor in his young days and, to do him justice, he made no secret of it. Hollow-cheeked and sunken-eyed, the tumult of his early life had left its mark upon him. He stooped, and his blue, knitted jersey hung in folds about his emaciated frame. His face was pale and cadaverous, with a long black beard. He had a churchyard cough and an apostolic fervour. He was not, on the whole, an exhilarating person, but he was kind to me; he instructed me in seamanship, and I loved him. But whether I loved him better than I loved Mr. Rooke is doubtful.

Mr. Rooke was not a reclaimed sinner; no

one ever called *him* Cap'n ; but he had a notable advantage over Cap'n Dark. He was the possessor of a gift, unique in my experience. He could *wag his nose*, as a dog wags its tail. I am not exaggerating. It was not a mere involuntary quiver of the nostrils, but a distinct oscillation, a waving to and fro, as certain insects wave their *antennæ*, of the fleshy extremity of his proboscis. The contemplation of this surprising phenomenon gave me immense satisfaction. I never grew weary of observing it. And each series of wags—for they came in series—never failed to give me a voluptuous thrill.

My childhood was rich in experiences of this nature and, in my own family, I numbered a great-uncle who could shift his hat backwards and forwards on his head, and even cause it to fall to the ground, merely by setting in motion the muscles of his cranium, and without touching it with his hand. But this idiosyncrasy, though striking, was incomparably less impressive than the waving pendulum with which the gods had enriched the countenance of Mr. Rooke.

I must not forget Luscombe. Not, indeed, that I was one of his customers. That was forbidden me by the Aunts, for one or two reasons. To begin with, Luscombe was accustomed to give vent to his emotions, which were easily stirred, with a vehemence of expression and a prodigality of epithet that incurred their marked disapproval. It was hinted, too, that he used to beat his wife and

to give her other, and perhaps more serious, cause for complaint. Yet he must have possessed some secretly compensating attractions, for she, poor woman, adored him.

But, apart from all this, there was another circumstance which, of itself, would have sufficed to put sober and godfearing folk on their guard against him, and that was the name he had given to his boats. Cap'n Dark had but one boat, and she was chastely called "The Lily." Mr. Rooke's fleet consisted of "The Punch" and "The Judy," names which, though not to be compared with "The Lily," emblem of purity, had no definite suggestion of scandal about them. But "Why Not" and "Try Me," which composed Luscombe's fleet—there was, unhappily, no doubt about them! In prudent minds, such names were at once associated with something very like lubricity, and when, on a warm summer's eve, a lass embarked with her lover in the "Why Not" or the "Try Me" (particularly the latter) elderly folk would shake their heads in solemn disapproval, for they felt that perils, other than those of the flood, would assuredly attend such a rash adventure.

If, indeed, the Sirens sang to the occupants of Luscombe's boats, luring them to destruction, I never heard their dangerous strains. I stuck to "The Lily." She was slow, and heavy, and amazingly broad in the beam, but like most females exhibiting these characteristics—she was safe!

THE GREAT LADY

IT must have been thirty-five years ago that I first saw Miss H—— who lived in a beautiful sixteenth-century house in a parish adjoining West Putford. It must, as I say, have been thirty-five years ago since she came in one afternoon to see my Aunts at Bideford, with whom I was spending my summer holidays—and yet it seems like yesterday. She was old then, and she seems no older now. In the days when I first made her acquaintance, her face was ruddy and full of puckers, like a pippin that has ripened in a sunny loft. Miss H—— was rich, but you would never have guessed it from her clothes, which were threadbare and coarse, such as, one imagines, are worn by the inmates of a penitentiary; but she was an aristocrat—a “lady,” as the Victorians used to say—and she had the “grand manner,” the most beautiful and most perfectly natural manner imaginable. And that in itself is a priceless possession. It does not fade.

In some ways she was in advance of her time. Even in those far-off days she wore her hair, which was iron-grey, *shingled*. It was still shingled when I called on her this summer, but it was quite white and, surmounting her ruddy, smiling face, her large blue eyes *à fleur de tête*, it made her look more like a boy than ever. In another way she was very much behind the times, for she was highly respectable and made no attempt to conceal it. And that, it will be admitted, is an anachronism. It is perhaps true that the impregnable fortress of her virtue was never very seriously assailed. . . . And then, quite late in life, long after she had reached the age when Prospero's every third thought was of his grave, a strange, a portentous, a stupendous thing happened to her—she married! Even this did not depress her. She married a roaring, roystering swashbuckler of an estate agent who had already worried one wife into the grave, and who saw in her rent roll, which was heavy, a means of repairing the caducity of his fortunes. He obligingly drank himself to death before any serious inroads had been made on my friend's estate.

I remember seeing him once, seated helpless—but sober—in an enormous armchair, his feet resting on a stool and his swollen legs encased in trousers that buttoned up all the way down, from the thighs to the feet, dropsy having made it impossible for him to indue those integuments in the customary fashion. One day he fell with

a crash, like one of the many great trees he had caused to be taken down about the place—and he did not get up again. Apoplexy had felled him.

My conversation with Miss H—— always followed the same general lines, and I never failed to refer, before I took my leave, to her father's translation of Dante. Her father, a learned man and a great collector of books, who had been Rector of some place in Cumberland, had been a Fellow of his College, and had translated the whole of the *Divina Commedia* into the original "terza rima." Unhappily this "sad mechanic exercise" had killed whatever poetry the translator may have had in his composition, and the thing was only readable with extreme difficulty. Indeed, it would be rash to guarantee that anyone had ever read it, save the translator and his daughter. She once read it completely through, she would tell me, as an act of filial piety. "I read every word religiously," she would say. "It took me several months, and I was immensely relieved when I got to the end of it."

THE REGATTA

IT is only the places I knew as a child that I really love. I imagine that is so with everyone, more or less. Or, if I can be said to love other places, it is with another sort of love, enthusiastic perhaps, but more akin to admiration, and that is a very different thing.

I have not been a great traveller, but were I taken to some of the most imposing scenes the world can offer, I should no doubt be dazzled, staggered, amazed—but I should be glad to get back to Bideford Bridge. I do not say that there are not bridges which in the abstract are grander and, considered absolutely, more beautiful. But Bideford Bridge is part and parcel of my *ego*; it is ME!

I was sorry the bridge had to be widened. All reasonable people would say that a stone parapet was far better than an iron one, and that, anyhow, the iron parapet had been an innovation in its day. True; but that is logic, and logic

is an inhuman thing. It has nothing to do with love. I loved the iron parapet because I had known it long ; because it was my friend. When they took it away, they took part of me with it. When we lose everything that attaches us to this world, what is that but death ? When we lose sight for ever of something we have long loved, or when death robs us of a friend, it is not these things alone that die, but a piece of ourselves with them. That is why people grow conservative as they grow old. It is themselves to which they cling.

This intimate love of places and things is the slow growth of years ; the leisurely, imperceptible accumulation of countless infinitesimal impressions—vague, minute, evanescent and seemingly trivial things—which, though we do not consciously record them, are not lost. They go to the building of that House of Many Mansions which we call Memory, the dwelling-place of the shades of all things, animate or inanimate, which we have loved, and from which we have been sundered by time, or distance, or death.

And so it is that these progressive folk—developers of estates, removers of ancient landmarks, road-builders, restorers of ancient buildings, and the like—are all so many robbers who break into our House of Dreams and steal from us treasures beyond price. And against that robbery there is no insurance.

Though it is of a ghost that I am thinking

to-day as I walk very slowly over Bideford Bridge, it is the ghost of no person that steals into my mind : it is the ghost of a scene, and that scene is the Regatta. . . . The town, and especially the promenade by the river bank, is gay with bunting. Booths, roundabouts, swings, coco-nut shies, sweet-stalls are jumbled together on the piece of ground just beyond the "Pill." No, the "Pill" is not there now, I know that. It has been filled in this many a year. It vanished, I think, somewhere about the same time as the Rope Walk. What the "Pill" was, and why it was so-called, I know not, nor ever had the curiosity to enquire. I looked on it as a thing of nature. It was a sort of broad gulley with no apparent issue on the landward side, into which and out of which the tide flowed twice a day. But, supposing it served some useful purpose then, why does the need for it no longer exist ? Let no one enlighten me on this matter. I had rather it remained a mystery

To-day, instead of the "Pill," there is a broad gravel space on which stands an Art School and a statue of Charles Kingsley. Still, I would rather they had left me my muddy Pill, notwithstanding its alarming smells. The skies were mirrored in it when it was full, the sun, the moving clouds, the glow of evening, and the moon and stars. But I am wandering from my theme, the Regatta. . . .

The tide is out, the sandy bed of the river is exposed to the view, and, on its clear, hard sur-

face, the athletic sports are in progress. These sports take place in the morning. In the afternoon, when the river is full, will come the aquatic contests, the Regatta proper. But now the sports are in full swing. There are running races, obstacle races, three-legged races, pony races, donkey races, races for the old, races for the young, and—wondrous sight!—there is climbing the greasy pole, and behold! the prize, a leg of mutton bedecked with coloured streamers, is pendent from its summit.

The booths, with their varied attractions, will not lure me to-day. I shall pass by the sweet-stalls and their gaudy sticks of peppermint like miniature barbers' poles. I shall look unmoved on the ginger-snaps, and the brandy-balls, and the barley sugar. I shall disdain the tinsel-covered sticks with the streamers of red-white-and-blue. I shall not purchase a squirt, or even a peacock's feather to tickle the necks of the giggling girls. The surprising anatomical development of the Fat Lady will leave me cold. Even if I am invited, as once I was, to go in and see the Hermaphrodite, I shall pass by and pay no heed. Time was when I was not so incurious. "Come in and see the Half-Man and Half-Woman," shouted the showman in stentorian tones, as he stood at the door of his tent; and, as if that were not incentive enough, the rascal exhibited a placard with the legend, writ in giant letters, "Men Only Admitted." That decided me.

Wedged tight in a reeking crowd of quid-chewing longshoremen, sniggering shop-boys, tow-headed yokels, clumsy clodhoppers, and gaping chaw-bacons, I stood till the showman, judging the crowd sufficiently large, was pleased to admit us to view this biological monstrosity. Squeezed, hustled, battered, shoved this way and that, I strove manfully to maintain my ground. At last the moment came. We began to advance. However, all my efforts only succeeded in getting me in at the very rear of the throng. Once inside, I managed, now and again, by standing on tip-toe, to get a glimpse of the platform at the far end of the tent. It was August, and the heat and the smell of mingled sweat and dust and fustian were terrific.

At last the showman mounted the platform. He delivered himself of a few preliminary remarks and bowed. "Now then," I said to myself, "now we shall see." Those in the front row may have seen, but all I saw was a glass jar about the size of a jam jar, in which, floating in a liquid that may have been spirits-of-wine, was something that looked like a piece of crumbling tinder. That was the Hermaprodite. There were murmurs of disappointment among the spectators. I deemed it prudent to retreat, and in a second I found myself once more in the clean air, a poorer and a wiser "man." I treated myself to a few revolutions on the roundabout, to the inspiring accompaniment of the steam-organ, and found

it a healthier and more exhilarating entertainment.

But, the afternoon, that is the time ! When crews from Appledore and Barnstaple, ay, and Plymouth, Devonport, Exmouth, Dartmouth, will compete for the coveted trophy. It will be good, as of old, to see them

sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows.

I shall hope Bideford will win, and I shall stake my modest half-crown on their picked "four."

Then the night will come down and the naphtha flares will shine out on the river-bank, the fires that supply the steam to the roundabouts will be stoked up, and the steam-organs will blare with redoubled vigour "After the Ball," "Two Lovely Black Eyes," "Good-bye, Dollie Gray," and "Soldiers in the Park," and then, long after midnight, the sound of the tide, smothered hitherto by so much music and laughter and shouting, will again be audible, its waters tinkling like little fairy bells about the bastions of the old bridge, as they flow down seaward from the silent hills.

MORNING PRAYERS

WHEN the breakfast table had been cleared, and the silver salt-cellars—the salt in them having been patted down and smoothed into a level surface—put away in the red-lined corner-cupboard, and the white linen tablecloth folded up with elaborate care so that the original creases should be kept and no new ones added, a pile of Bibles would be brought out from the bookcase and ranged round the table, and we should take our seats in silence. The servants would be called in. They did not sit at the table, but on horsehair chairs, near the door, holding their books on their white aprons. Then, beginning with Uncle William and going round in due order, each person at the table would read a verse, the reading being continued until the whole of the chapter was finished. The servants did not read, but only listened. The place where we last left off would be indicated in each Bible with a bookmarkersuch as

you do not commonly see nowadays. These bookmarkers consisted of long strips of fine perforated cardboard, on which were woven, in brilliant coloured silks, elaborate patterns enclosing, as in a frame, a text or pious exhortation from the Scriptures

When my Aunts wished to send to their cousins at Barnstaple, or to their nephews and nieces in London, some token of remembrance, that token not infrequently took the form of a pen-wiper or a book-marker. My pen-wipers, I fear, are all lost, but I have before me now one book-marker that has been saved from destruction. On a broadish strip of rose-coloured ribbon, about nine inches long, is stitched a piece of perforated card-board, delicate as ivory, and upon it are inwrought, in letters of rose, the words, "Remember me when thought avails."

In the course of time the whole of the Scriptures would be read through. And when the last verse of Revelation had been recited, the next morning we should begin again on the first chapter of Genesis.

When the chapter for the morning had been read, the chairs would be pushed back for prayers. Everyone would kneel down, their eyes fixed on the horse-hair seats. Uncle William read the prayers from a book printed in large black type. I think they were Church of England prayers, but of that I cannot be positive, not being, in the days of my innocence, any great judge of such matters.

During breakfast we should all converse in easy, ordinary tones, but when the table was cleared and the Bibles handed round, our voices would be muted to something just above a whisper, the sort of muffled murmur in which the vergers directs you to your seat in church when you have arrived late and the service has begun.

Doctrinal questions seemed non-existent in that house, or happily composed. Logically, I suppose, my aunts, being Plymouth Sisters, and going on Sunday to a place mysteriously referred to as "The Room," should have looked upon Uncle William, who went to church and sat with his fellow-councillors in the Corporation pew, as one destined for perdition. But they were too gentle and charitable to have thought that about anybody. Calvin himself could not have entertained an unflattering opinion of my Uncle William, whose soul was as guileless and candid as a little child's.

True he loved the good things of this world. He would lead me into his garden of an afternoon and with great care select two ripe peaches, one for me and one for him, and, taking his silver fruit knife from his waistcoat pocket, he would skin mine and then his own, and we would eat them, the juice running down our chins, with the glee of a pair of schoolboys. Of a Sunday, after midday dinner he would sip his port with a notable relish, and he loved a good cigar. If there was any sinfulness in his enjoy-

ment of the port, he expiated it with periodic attacks of gout, which he bore with unruffled cheerfulness.

Rather strangely he was a Liberal in politics. Once, from the balcony of the New Inn, he was addressing a great crowd in the market-place in support of the Liberal candidate. Liberalism was unpopular just then, and not even the love they bore the speaker prevented the people from interrupting his discourse. "Very well, then," he shouted above the din, "if you won't hear me speak, you shall hear me sing." With a smile he struck up "The Bay of Biscay," beating time with his forefinger. By the time he had reached the second verse the whole crowd was joining in.

His nearest approach to sinning was the affair of the plough. It occurred in his youth. He and a friend were driving along one day when they happened to come to a pond beside which a plough was standing. No one was in sight, and getting down from their trap, they dragged the plough into the pond till it was completely submerged and hidden from view. Then they drove on. Returning the same way an hour or two later, they found a countryman standing there with a look on his face of mingled terror and bewilderment. "Av 'ee zeed aught of a pleugh?" he cried out to them in tones of agonised despair. They got down and, after pretending to look round for the vanished plough, they suggested looking for it in the pond.

“Must have been the pixies,” said the man in an awe-struck voice.

Uncle William died while he was for the second time mayor. The whole town mourned his loss, and I think the whole town must have been present at his funeral. When I think of Uncle William, I think of many things besides, but perhaps most often of my misdemeanour at prayers. He forgave me, as he forgave everybody.

It happened that my elder brother, passing through Bideford on his way to Bradworthy, had stayed the night at the Aunts'. Next morning he was of course present at prayers. He read his verse with correctness and considerable expression. After the reading, the chairs were pushed back and we all knelt down. It chanced that my brother was kneeling opposite me. His face looked straight into mine above the bar of the chair. The prayers began. I lowered my gaze devoutly. The first prayer came to an end and there was a pause and a deep silence. I could hear the clock ticking on the mantelpiece at the other end of the room. In a fatal moment, I raised my eyes from the seat of my chair and looked at my brother. Unlike me, my brother has good, well-chiselled features, an aquiline nose and a well-marked chin ; but, precisely because he has this handsome face he is able, by distorting it, to make the most horrible grimaces imaginable. *Corruptio optimi pessima*. As I looked, it was not my brother that I saw, but a gargoyle as hideous as any that

ever presented itself to the imagination of the most ingenious of monkish architects. A diabolical leering, hellish visage.

I felt a prodigious desire to laugh. I struggled against it with all my might. I tried to concentrate on the prayers that had now begun again. I thought of other things,—the river, my boat, the rollers breaking on the sands at Westward Ho! I grew calm, so calm that, in a moment of idiotic self-confidence, a moment of fatal rashness, I looked again at my brother. His features were no longer puckered into lines and furrows. No; his cheeks were now distended like two balloons, after the manner of those chubby-faced cherubs you may see seated with dimpled posteriors on woolly clouds blowing into celestial trumpets with all the force of their innocent lungs. It was too much . . .

Aunt Mo led me gently but firmly from the room. I stole a glance at my brother as I passed. He was looking very devout and a little pained. My Aunt closed the door quietly behind us, and took me into the room on the other side of the hall. I did not explain, but standing with submissive head, bore her admonition in silence.

Laughter does not come so easily now. That is one of the penalties of age. It is regrettable, for laughter is a great antiseptic of the soul, purging it of black humours and melancholy exhalations. Most of us whose lungs were so "tickle o' the sere" in our young days, are at the best capable of a smile, and that rather a sad

one, in our old. Laughter is the prerogative of primitive ages, of the childhood of men and of nations. We hear of Homeric laughter, but not of Virgilian. No, I am afraid I should not laugh now if my brother made faces at me, even during prayers. It is a pity.

THE PARISH CLERK

I NEVER knew him in the flesh—but I knew him all the same. He was the hero of some of my father's best stories, and I have never heard anyone tell a story—at least a Devonshire story—so well as my father. He could reproduce the accent with an unemphatic ease and sureness of intonation that I have never heard surpassed. That, alas, can only be conveyed by the living voice, and his voice has been silent this many a year.

You must know that in those days, *circa* 1840, there were no organs or even harmoniums in the smaller village churches ; at all events there was none at —, where my grandfather was rector. To make up for it, there was an excellent band consisting of a first and second fiddle, a flute, a clarinet, bassoon, and double bass, who, considering that they were farm workers, “born to labour and the mattock hardened hand,” played astonishingly well.

As the service approached the rubric "in choirs and places where they sing," the performers, at a given signal from their leader, would clatter out of the church and "tune up" under the tower, trooping in again, with rather a self-conscious and complacent smirk on their faces, to accompany the hymn. In course of time the ranks of the musicians became woefully thinned, and, finally, the orchestra came to an end altogether. It then fell to the parish clerk to "pitch the tunes." He would say, in a loud, emphatic voice: "Us'll now sing to the praise and glory o' God hymn one 'unnerd an' forty-nine!" He would then sing four notes of the octave, one-three-five-eight, and off they would go. Once it happened that the top notes were hopelessly beyond the compass even of the highest trebles. At the end of the first verse he held up his hand, after the manner of a policeman stopping the traffic, and in stentorian tones thundered, "Stop! Us 'ave putch 'un too high: us must putch 'un again."

He was a great stickler for decorum, was this clerk, and if, during the prayers he noticed some youth—or maiden—who was not inclined in a becoming attitude of supplication, he would give the offender a smart tap on the head with his staff, accompanying the action with a peremptory command to "lie vore." On one occasion, however, this unbending disciplinarian had, himself, to be called to order. It happened that a pious benefactress had given a handsome

new Bible to the church which, in addition to its sumptuous binding, presented this superiority over the volume it superseded : it was enriched with *marginal notes*. Unsuspicious of the snare which this addition to the sacred text involved, the worthy clerk, when the time came for him to read the lessons, continued right across the page into the notes. The effect was naturally bewildering to the listeners. Grasping the situation, my grandfather bent down and, in a whisper, indicated to the reader the line beyond which he should not go. "Lord, zur," exclaimed the clerk in tones of loud amazement ; "Lord, zur, I nivver zeed no boundary line ! "

Later on, a harmonium was purchased by my grandfather, but it was kept during the week at the parsonage. On Sundays it was wheeled down to the church in a large barrow. This delicate undertaking was superintended, if not actually performed, by the parish clerk. He referred to the operation as "carrin' down the moosick." For quite a long time the music was "carred" to and from the church without mishap. One day, however, Saint Cecilia, who, as the patron saint of harmony, no doubt kept a watchful eye over the weekly transit of this humble instrument, must have momentarily withdrawn her protection, for the barrow and its freight were, by some inexplicable mischance, precipitated into a ditch. The shock had such a disturbing effect on the interior economy of the harmonium that it had to be sent to the neigh-

bouring market-town for repairs and, for a long succession of Sundays, Clerk Harris—for why should I conceal the name of that praiseworthy man?—had to “putch the tunes.”

From all I have heard about the rector, I fear he must have been what pious “methodies” would have called “an idle shepherd.” Parsons in those days, or at least in that part of the country, were often keen sportsmen—hard riders and hard drinkers. My grandfather’s eloquence—and I am told that he was a stirring preacher and a fine reader—was, if all stories are true, not invariably inspired by solitary meditation. I mean no disrespect to his memory. He was altogether too modest and too genial a man to set himself up above his brother clerics. He merely did as they did, and they would have regarded themselves as lacking in their duty had they forborne to show by example, as well as by precept, that they were becomingly thankful for all the kindly fruits of the earth and for the liquors that man has learned to distil from them. At all events he filled his church, and the fact that his surplice did not always completely conceal the riding breeches and top boots he might occasionally have had on underneath, detracted in no wise from the raciness of his sermons or the respect with which he was regarded.

A MEMORABLE DRIVE

TO Bradworthy, where my Uncle Eusebius was a doctor, I went sometimes, and, though I loved Bideford better—because of the river—Bradworthy was not without its attractions. It also had its terrors, not the least of them being the gigantic brown owl that sat within its glass case on the landing, and stared at me as I went up to bed with eyes like two glowing carbuncles set in the centre of a pair of mushrooms. Then there was the rookery behind the house, with its silent pool, a place of shadows, green and bronze and russet gold, a twilight region of echoes and sighs and whisperings. I did not care about going into the rookery by myself, especially in the evening. It was like being left alone in a great church.

I loved best to go into the garden. To get to it you crossed the yard with its paving of round cobbles. It was surrounded by a high grey wall, and you entered through a wooden

doorway set in a pointed arch. The door was heavy, and creaked upon its hinges, and the colour of it was a pale greenish blue. Inside it was full of scents—of flowers and fragrant herbs. One might spend one's time very pleasantly there among the ripe gooseberries and the red and white currants and the strawberries and the raspberries, and there was a wall for peaches and wall-gages, and trees with great yellow plums that looked like balls of honey, and tasted as sweet. Then there was the harness room, where I helped Short (the coachman) polish the curbs and the bits. Short was a sort of intendant or manager of the place. He gave orders to the gardeners and stable boys, and cut the hair of the household.

Sometimes my uncle would take me with him on his rounds, which were long. When he went in to see a patient I sat in the gig and held the reins. When dinner-time came we would go in and eat egg-and-bacon pasty, or squab-pie or potato-pie at a farm-house, followed, in my case, with bread and cream and treacle, and then home again in the evening to high-tea in the great dining-room—a gigantic ham, and saffron cakes and revel buns and apple pasties and cream. And then, when the lamp was brought in and my uncle and aunt settled down to their game of cribbage, I went off to bed up the shadowy staircase, past an amazing clock which told I know not what—the movements of the sun and the moon and the stars ; heavens, what did it not

tell—where, I wonder, is that clock now?—and past the hideous owl which, in my dreams, would come and dig its claws into my chest and stare at me with great unblinking eyes.

But I was unfortunate at Cleverdon, such was the name of my uncle's house. I got into bad odour with my great-aunt there. My uncle had a little farm a few miles off. It was a sort of hobby with him, and being but a hobby it prospered amazingly. Faunus was kind to his herds and his crops. One day I went with one of the hands in a cart, or butt, to bring back a load of manure for the home garden. The manure was of the kind that is known as ripe. It was about the consistency of rather moist pease pudding, and we left a dark trail behind us on the dusty road. Somehow, I must have sat awkwardly, I suppose, and the shifting mess of our cargo impinged upon the sitting part of my nether garments. I became conscious of a dampness. . . .

When on my return I went into tea, I sat as usual upon one of the tapestried chairs, but I had not been there long before glances eloquent of enquiry and even dismay were exchanged among the rest of the company. 'There was a something that could not be ignored, a distinct, an all-pervading, a dominant, and most pungent effluvium. It was traced to me. I was made to stand up. The dark hue of my knickerbockers revealed nothing to the eye but, oh horror! the delicate grey ground, with tender shades of blue

and red and palest green, of the tapestried chair was defiled by a great brown and most evil-smelling stain. . . .

Time is a great healer. I little thought then, in the hour of my humiliation, that I should one day look back not without pleasure on that ill-fated ride on a dung-cart.

THE EXILE

I DO not know ; but I suppose that all three of the aunts sat in judgment upon me that night. Be that as it may, it was Aunt Mo who passed the sentence. She spoke with gentleness, yet with great solemnity, and more in sorrow than in anger. The white cap, with the black encircling band of velvet tied in a bow in front, looked more spotless than ever that morning. The sentence was irrevocable ; I knew that from her tone, and from the look in her eyes, which seemed to be contemplating some sad, majestic vision hidden from my unworthy gaze. She had cause to be sorrowful, for she had taken great pains with me, and now, alas, I had failed her ! The Old Adam, which she had sought to banish from my breast, was still rank and rampant within me.

Aunt Mo had taught me to read. Seated side by side, with *Line upon Line* open on the table before us, we had read "David, or the Farewell." We had read "Samuel, or the

Little Prophet," which told how Eli really loved God, though he had done one wrong thing. These we had read, and many other stories. And as we read, she had taught me with love and with patience, to master the secret of those little black signs called letters, and shown me how these letters are made into words—words which are responsible for so much that is good and so much that is evil in this world. At her knee I had learned the twenty-third psalm—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters."

Those pastures and those waters,—had I not seen them at Wear Gifford, at evening, when the tide was full, and the golden rose of the sky was mirrored in its untroubled surface, and the pastures, green-gold in the setting sun, where the cattle stood knee-deep in the lush grass and the white cottages crowned with thatch and garlanded with honeysuckle, and climbing roses and jessamine? The peace that passeth all understanding rested like a benison upon that scene. And the Shepherd, though I had seen Him not, was surely close at hand.

And now it was all over. The river, my boat, and especially the old house (now that I was to say farewell to them), crept "into my study of imagination" with an intolerably appealing sweetness. The dark-panelled dining-room that looked on to the street; the low bay windows, veiled along their nether half by wicker screens

woven like the seat of a caned chair ; the dark-red table-cloth with the black pattern ; the corner cupboards brought back by my Uncle Henry, the sea-captain, from the Far East,—black they were, with queer oriental designs of fishes and dragons in gold, and lined with red, against which the glass and silver, kept there for daily use, gleamed pleasantly—how dear and familiar they all seemed !

And the old bookcase with the wonderful glass panes my aunts thought so much of ; and the carven monkeys grinning at each extremity of its cornice ; and the drawing-room upstairs, with the tall screen made out of coloured “scraps” coated over with varnish, and the oblong musical-box of inlaid mahogany with the long brass cylinder, hirsute as an unshaven chin, and the label inside the cover, whereon was traced in faded ink the names of the tunes—“ Air from Norma,” “ Air from Lucia di Lammermoor,” *et cetera* ; and the garden with the great quarrenden apple-tree, and the summer-house where I used to sit with Uncle William in the dusk, watching the red glow of his cigar go in and out like an occulting lighthouse. And now there was to be an end of it. And it was all my own fault—as if that made it any the less bitter ! I had not, indeed, eaten, but I had made perilously close acquaintance with, the Tree of Knowledge, and, in the face of the clearest evidence, I had stubbornly denied my guilt. I think it was the lie and the cunning (oh ! surely the serpent had

whispered in my ear !) with which I endeavoured to pass the whole thing off, quite as much as the actual misdemeanour, that brought about this expulsion from my Paradise.

There had been a considerable sea-mist creeping along the river bank that fatal evening, clammy and rather chill. Who would have dreamed that the Aunts would choose to walk abroad in such an atmosphere ? I was coming along, proud and blissful, my arm encircling the waist of my Muse—who, by day, was disguised as a junior assistant in a boot-shop—when, at a sudden turn in the path, just where, beyond the derelict ship-yard, the long dark bridge comes into view, fretting the broad waters of the river, I walked straight into Aunt Ellen and Aunt Mo. Both were wearing their black mantles and their little close-fitting chip bonnets. Quick as lightning, I flashed my arm from the damsel's waist, and, taking my watch from my pocket with a notable flourish, I remarked in a clear, cold voice, as if in answer to a question, that it was half-past six. Ingenious but unavailing subterfuge !

That night I thought they had not seen, and sleep did not desert my pillow. Alas, next morning a telegram was sent to London, and a day or two later came a letter from my father, desiring my return, for that my mother was away and he would like my company. I went with a sickening feeling in the pit of my stomach. But my father never so much as alluded to the matter. He looked at me as I went in to him . . . and

I knew that he knew! He kissed me on the forehead that night when I went up to bed, and deeper than the sternest reprimand, that kiss went home to my heart.

When, years afterwards, I revisited the town, I happened to go into the post-office with my little boy to buy some stamps. There was something about the assistant who served me that seemed to awaken old memories. She turned aside to tear off the stamps I wanted from the sheet, then she opened a drawer and searched in a wooden bowl for my change. When she came face to face with me again I knew I was not mistaken. I think she remembered too. We did not refer to the past. I took my stamps and my money, and, hand in hand with my son, went out of the shop.

THE PATRIARCH

IT was a clear, still night ; moonless, but starlit, and cold, with just a suspicion of frost in the air. The patriarch lent me a pair of his boots, high boots reaching to the knee, the kind that sailors wear. They were too big for me, the leather was hard, and as I walked, or rather stumbled, along the muddy lane, full of ruts and puddles, the right boot began to chafe my ankle. I had a twisted ground-ash stick—a “ walking pole ” they call it in those parts—to help me along. The patriarch carried the lantern. The leafless branches of the trees flung weird writhing shadows before us as we went. It seemed a long way, because my foot was hurting. I bore it stoically. At last, having gone about a mile, we came to a gate on our right. That was the field we were bound for. Within the limited orbit of the lantern’s rays, the grass shone a lurid, unearthly green that faded away on the circumference into an illimitable expanse of

blackness. A wind was blowing across from the moor. It seemed, even on this winter's night, to bring with it a fragrance, a promise of spring.

The patriarch stood with one hand on the hasp of the gate; the lantern hung down beside him from the other. He was in the shadow, but a soft glow lit up his face. I could make out his features and his eyes. And, as I looked at the figure standing upright before me, with the light shining from the lantern, his hand on the latch, it seemed to me that I had seen the picture before.

I elected to stay by the gate and wait till he had done his round of the field. There were some fifty ewes in the field, and he must count them and their lambs, and see that no lamb was lying too far away from its mother. He departed with his lantern. From time to time I watched him bend down and move his lantern round about something lying on the ground; something that looked like a grey heap. Then he moved on farther, to another heap, and as he went, his lantern bobbed up and down like the lantern of a fishing-boat tossing with the waves. And the light of it grew fainter and fainter, till it dwindled to a mere point, and finally disappeared into the darkness. I don't know how long I waited; but it seemed a prodigious time, in the silence and the gloom. At last I saw the lantern again, far off, dancing like a will-o'-the-wisp in the darkness. Slowly, with many

stoppages and détours, it came nearer and nearer.

All his ewes and all his lambs were safe, but one was lying far away from the rest, and it had been a difficult job to find it. That was why he had been so long. We trudged home again to the farm. But before going back to the great kitchen with its blazing fire, we clattered and slithered across the wet, uneven cobbles of the farmyard to a great byre. He opened the door, and holding aloft the lantern, illumined row upon row of horned cattle, standing meek and patient. The light of the lantern shone into the eyes of those in front and made them blink sleepily. "You might not have thought it," said the patriarch, as we turned and went away, "you might not have thought, if you hadn't seen them with your own eyes, that there were one hundred head of cattle within a stone's throw of your bedroom, for you'll hardly hear a sound of them, so still they keep of a night."

When we got in, an armful of furze was crackling cheerfully about the great log, throwing a blaze right across the vast kitchen, making the shadows wreathe strange dances.

As I sat and sipped my grog that night, I looked with a respect akin to awe upon the patriarch. At length, having finished my glass and knocked my pipe out on the smouldering log, I took my candle and went up to bed. Opening my window, I leaned out and listened. I could hear no sound save the sighing of the

wind in the trees. As I began to fall asleep, I saw again, as in a dream, the dark figure with the lantern, his hand on the latch of the gate. And again I saw the horned cattle in the byre looking at me with their liquid eyes.

II. LONDON

AUNT ISABELLA

DR. Hayes was a bachelor, and his sister Isabella—Aunt Isabella, we used to call her—kept house for him. She watched over his well-being, his health, and his interests with a jealous but noble ferocity. When he began, he must have had mighty little money. Farms in Ireland, even when they are ancestral farms, are not gold-mines ; and a house in Clarges Street was not to be rented for nothing. No, Thomas Crawford must have had to sail precious near the wind. He had brains. No doubt about that. But he had mind—he was a philosopher and a poet—and mind, as distinct from brains, is not always a passport to worldly success. He must have been a speculation—that's what it comes to—and his people, that is to say his relatives, put their money on him—floated him so to speak, and they appointed Aunt Isabella as managing director. They could not have done better. The world, for her, was summed

up in her brother Thomas. He was husband, lover, children, everything to her. She slaved for him. She cooked for him, she scolded him, she protected him from his foes, and what was more important, from his friends. She was his faithful watch-dog, and the passion with which she enacted the part, gave her in time not a little of the appearance of a mastiff. Yes, Aunt Isabella was plain, not passively, but aggressively plain.

I am afraid I did not love Aunt Isabella. Nor, to be quite frank, did she love me. She never said so, it is true. But one knows. There is an influence—an aura. Besides, she had good reason to disapprove of me—to say the least of it. This I freely confess. It was years before, that I incurred her displeasure, when I was yet an infant “trailing clouds of glory.” In those days I slept in the same room with Sarah my nurse, and every morning I used to leave my cot and go round to Sarah’s bed, and she would take me in, and I would snuggle down beside her. One day Aunt Isabella’s niece, Tiny she was called—ironically, I suppose, for she was a bulky child—was staying the night at our house, and a third bed had been made up for her in Sarah’s room. Tiny had awakened before me, and she had crept into Sarah’s bed, and when I got there I found her in my place. Instantly I became possessed with all the blind, obscure passions of those countless generations of savages, my remote ancestry. Sarah I looked upon as be-

longing solely to me, as my exclusive possession. I believed she was. It will be seen that I was not very deeply versed in the ways of women when I was two and a half!

The outrage was intolerable; it called for instant reprisal. Sarah took me in on the other side of her, and went to sleep. Some minutes, it might have been five, went by. Suddenly the silence was rent by a shriek of concentrated anguish. "Auntie," shouted Tiny in accents of mingled pain and terror, "Auntie, James has bitten me!" It was so. The tidings which she thus proclaimed, *urbi et orbi*, were true! Burrowing beneath the bedclothes, I had made my way across the recumbent form of the slumbering and too complaisant Sarah, I had sought the body of the intruding damsel, I had explored it till, by tactile evidence, I found its softest and most yielding part. Into that delicious pulp, with all the strength which fury could lend to my maxillary muscles, I drove my teeth, drove them till they met together—and then pulled. . . .

Small wonder Aunt Isabella looked on me with mistrustful eye. But strange to say, Tiny bore me no grudge.

MRS. THOMPSON

IT is a proud day in the life of a man when he can speak of *his* tailor, with an emphatically proprietary accent on the possessive adjective, as if *his* tailor practised the sartorial art for him alone. Now I, backward in most things, was forward in this. I had a tailor, my tailor, when I was five. My tailor was Mrs. Thompson. I was her customer, her client, and I have reason to believe that she had no other customers but me. Mrs. Thompson was a sewing woman who used to come twice a week to our house. She was generally employed by my mother in hemming sheets and pillow-cases and tablecloths, and in making—and repairing—underclothes. All day long she sat and plied her needle, and I used to think that it was because she was so good and quiet that she was allowed to have her dinner in the kitchen along with Keziah and Sarah, which, next to polishing curbs, bits, and the bright parts of the harness in the

harness-room, was the thing I liked best in the world.

I have since learned that Mrs. Thompson had had a bitter experience of life, and that while she was hemming my mother's sheets with a look of infinite resignation in her pale watery eyes, she was weaving all manner of memories that clung about her like a winding-sheet.—It was, I suppose, because she was poor and because we were not rich, that my mother conceived the idea of getting Mrs. Thompson to make me a suit. It was a sailor's suit. I knew it was a sailor's suit, because it had a whistle suspended from a piece of white cord round my neck. But it had knickerbockers, which no sailor ever wore that I knew of, and those knickerbockers were like no knickerbockers that anyone—sailor or no sailor—ever wore. I call them knickerbockers, but they were really truncated trousers, of a length to allow for growing. And even that is not strictly accurate, for trousers have a front part and a back part, with a descending row of buttons, discreetly dissembled, down the front. With this emblem of maturer masculinity, it was then thought superfluous to endow me.

Howbeit, the absence thereof was not without a compensating advantage, since these knickerbockers, presenting a precisely identical appearance in their anterior and posterior aspects—being in fact but a pair of tubes gathered in at the waist by an elastic band—could be worn

indifferently, either way round. To that manly row of buttons and *one* pocket I was promoted in my next suit, purchased at an outfitter's in Ludgate Hill. That suit was neither exclusively marine nor exclusively terrene in character, but a combination of the two. It was fashioned like a sailor's, with broad collar and whistle and lanyard ; but it was made of a sort of grey homespun material—a strange amphibious thing. . . . Mrs. Thompson's suit lasted a long time, for my mother, if careless of the cut, was careful of the material, and Mrs. Thompson was a conscientious seamstress.

THE BOX OF SOLDIERS

LIFE Guards ! Three rows of them, six in a row—white plumes, gold helmets, gold breastplates, scarlet tunics, white breeches and black top-boots, riding fiery black chargers, and all made to dismount. How unlike my other cavalry, which not the impact of a cannon ball, not even the explosion of a subterranean mine, could dislodge from their horses !

In death they were not divided.

The ground (in the shape of a rectangular piece of green tin) might fail beneath them ; but still they kept their saddles. It was heroic, but it was not natural.

But now I saw visions of riderless steeds galloping wildly over a stricken field encumbered with the bodies of the slain ; I saw troopers, their chargers shot under them, carrying on a desperate fight against fearful odds. I had not visited Whitehall, at that date, or I might have seen my

Horse Guards—two of them—mounted on their chargers, compelled to stand for hours on end in a sort of exiguous box or kennel, facing the street, what time their dismounted comrades strutted to and fro within the court, the cynosure of nurserymaids and loitering errand boys.

Now these troopers whom I coveted so, being the King's guard, were big men. They were at least four times as big as my Grenadiers, whom I had hitherto looked upon as the flower of my army, as well I might, seeing that, standing on the ground, they easily out-topped the mounted troopers of my Camel Corps. But diversity is one of the characteristic charms of your leaden army. All you have to do is to arrange your men in due perspective, the big ones in the van, the little ones swarming over the crest of yonder range of hills, or making their way in open order through that wood there, three miles off on the right.

The Life Guards, then, presented no difficulty on the score of size. It was their price that stood in the way. For three successive days I had gazed on them as they lay in all their splendour behind the plate-glass shop-front, reposing like demi-gods on a cloudy bed of cotton-wool. I stood with my nose flattened against the window, I pleaded with my nurse to buy them, but in vain. They were too dear. I must perforce wait till my father and mother came home.

O malicious fate that had stolen away my parents from me at that crisis in my career!

What were they doing forsooth, holiday-making in Devonshire at such a juncture? And any day my precious soldiers might be snatched up by a rival strategist more liberally endowed than I with the sinews of war. I sickened at the thought.

Well, at length my erring parents returned, and the very next morning I must needs drag my dear mother away to that shop. Heaven be praised, they were still there! I think my mother must have known she had been wrong to stay away from me so long, for she made me divine amends. Bending down, she hugged me to her breast and kissed me. For a moment, as I looked into her eyes, I forgot my soldiers, forgot the world. There never were such eyes! Then she stood up, and straightway we marched, hand in hand, into the shop. Five minutes more and those soldiers were mine, and I was trotting along by my mother's side, clasping my Life Guards to my bosom. It was sweet to be alive that morning!

When the gods would chastise a man, they give him what he asks. It is certain I had incurred the displeasure of Heaven. I had looked upon those Life Guards with the eye of covetousness. I had lusted after them in my heart. I had sorely taxed the patience of my long-suffering nurse. I had most unreasonably importuned my dear mother. I was a meet subject for the attentions of Nemesis.

Well, I carried my soldiers home. I set them

up in proud array on the green tablecloth, and gloriously the light shone on plumed helmets and burnished cuirass.

Flashed all their sabres bare,
Flashed as they turned in air . . .

Alas, for the brevity of human joy! My exultation was short-lived. In an evil moment I decided that these stalwart braves should descend from their horses. Fatal resolve! Disastrous determination! The swan proudly breasting the unruffled waters of the lake does not differ more widely from the same fowl waddling and floundering along the banks thereof, than did my Life Guards bestriding their chargers contrast with the unseemly figure they presented when dislodged from their mounts.

It was not merely that they were bandy-legged, not merely that their bodies were rendered ludicrous by a chronic and "most ignoble stooping"; but that from the nether extremity of their lumbar region there projected a most unseemly elongation of the lower vertebra, as though a caudal appendage, a species of metallic tail. Ye gods! I gazed at this preposterous phenomenon with feelings of mingled repulsion and dismay. What ridiculous fools they looked! What an ignominious crew, capable only of a kangaroo-like and most unheroic mode of progression! The very nursemaids would despise them. Their heads—also

removable—worked loose, and assumed the most dissipated angles. I grew to hate those Life Guards, to hate them with a loathing proportionate to the passion with which I had erstwhile desired them.

I have had many longings since then. I have desired Beauty with all my heart, and desired her in forms less innocent and more costly than that box of soldiers. But too often I have found to my sorrow that possession of the coveted object is followed by a noticeable declension in its charm. Familiarity breeds, if not contempt, at least *ennui*.

And now, as often as I am tempted to chase some glittering will-o'-the-wisp, to embark on some over-ambitious enterprise, I bethink me of those Life Guards of my childish days, and draw back in time. The things we hanker after—wealth, power, renown—what are they, at the best, but toys, playthings, to keep us grown-up children amused till The Dustman comes, and it's time to go to bed!

MISS EMILY

I WORE my Eton suit that afternoon, with the pepper-and-salt trousers and the wide Eton collar. My mother sprinkled some eau de Cologne on my handkerchief, and there was a sort of Sabbath solemnity about the occasion, something hieratic, remote, lifted above the commonplaces of everyday existence. And indeed the occasion was no ordinary one, for it had been given out that I had won a prize. The announcement would have imposed an unwonted, nay an intolerable strain on my credulity and—*a fortiori*—on that of my parents, had it not been promulgated on the authority of no less a person than Miss Emily. Everybody held that Miss Emily was infallible. Miss Emily was globular in shape, and her pale visage was round like the moon at the full, and surmounted by the straightest of iron-grey hair parted in the middle, plastered down flat upon her head, and gathered tightly in a little ball about the size of a crab-apple at

at the nape of her neck. Evidently Miss Emily could not err.

Mrs. Cooke was the titular head of the school—Mrs. Cooke with her pale, rather distinguished features, and her eyes of watchet blue, from which she would gaze at you with an expression of infinite resignation. Where and what Mr. Cooke was and what he did, none of us ever rightly knew, but sometimes a shadowy simulacrum of a man carrying a scuttle of coal would be seen slinking furtively along the passage, shunning observation like a beetle surprised by the daylight—a humble, apologetic, broken-looking thing—he, I now suspect, was Cooke, and the secret cause of the look of patient sadness that brooded eternally upon the countenance of Mrs. Cooke. But, as I have said, it was Miss Emily who ruled the school. She was not harsh, or severe, but she governed with a placid, immovable determination that no one ever thought of opposing, and what she said was law.

When, then, Miss Emily said that I had won a prize, the thing sounded incredible, we could not account for it, but we believed it, because Miss Emily had said it—and there was an end of it.

So off we went, my mother and I, proud, expectant, and a little flustered, holding each other by the hand. But a more tremendous portent was awaiting us. If the Bank of England had suspended payment, if the stars had reeled from their appointed orbits, it could not have

filled us with stupefaction as the news that fell from the blanched lips of Mrs. Cooke as she greeted us on our arrival. Miss Emily had erred! She, the impeccable, the infallible, the immaculate Miss Emily, had by some fatal and inexplicable mischance, committed an error in summation, and it was not I, but another, who had won the guerdon. Howbeit I was awarded a consolation prize. It was called *Epochs and Episodes of History*—but none of the stirring events therein related was half so stupendous as the error of Miss Emily.

In falling from her high estate she dragged her brother from his pedestal. Miss Emily's brother, a lean, tallow-faced person with greasy black hair and wearing the turn-down collar and little black bow habitually affected by opponents of the Established Church, used to come regularly to give us what I believe are now known as "intelligence tests." He used to frighten me into a state of stammering idiocy. But from now onwards, I took heart and spoke up. I dealt him one or two shrewd thrusts. Miss Emily had not erred in vain. A little later I bade farewell for ever to Mrs. Cooke's Establishment for the Sons of Gentlemen. But I did not forget Miss Emily, who taught me that all women, even the plainest, are not immune from error.

THE CAPTAIN OF CRICKET

WE hear a great deal nowadays about the exploits of cricketers; of the skill and strategic wisdom of the captains and leaders of the various teams. How so-and-so won the toss and put his opponents, or his own side, in to bat. And how his judgment was good or bad, according, that is to say, as his side lost or won. I know the terrible burden of responsibility that weighs upon these men. I know, because I myself have been a captain. I was captain of my team when I was eight, which, you will admit, is a sign of considerable precocity. Alas, that youthful promise which shone so fair has been belied. I have never been a captain since. If I am to be quite truthful, I must let you into a secret. It was not my skill with the bat or ball that won me my promotion. I owed my rank not to my prowess, but to my pads. In the whole team, I was the only one who could boast a pair of pads. This gave me an immense

pull. Naturally I did not keep them exclusively for myself. When I went in, I wore them both ; when I got out, an event that often happened with disconcerting suddenness, I gave up one pad to my late partner at the wicket, and the other to my successor. A captain must show his status somehow. Since I could not show it by the superiority of my skill, I showed it by the perfection of my accoutrements.

Now these pads, which opened for me so easily the door of preferment, I owed to Sarah. She made them. They took a long time to make. Night after night, through the long winter, she would work with patient ingenuity at these greaves which were destined to raise me as it were out of the rut and make me a leader of men. They were made of chamois leather, strips of wood carefully shaped and polished with sand paper, and there was a hinge to allow of the proper bending of the knee ; and they fitted very neatly about the shoe. Of course the laths or strips of wood were encased in wadding.

When they were finished, they looked extraordinarily like the pads you buy. There were slight differences, and the most pronounced was the colour. Pads are usually a sort of greyish white. Mine were of the hue of the primrose or the daffodil. That anomaly was not serious ; moreover, time soon put it to rights. But Sarah gave me a set of stumps : not the things you purchase on a piece of cardboard complete with

bat, but full-sized stumps, bound round with brass at the top where the bails go on. And to complete my panoply she made me a bag out of a strip of disused stair-carpet. The carpet had a floral pattern, roses in full bloom, which I think is unusual in cricket bags. But it was strong and capacious.

It sometimes happened—usually as a result of the ferocious bowling of Healy—that one of the laths in the pads got broken. It then became necessary to extract the shattered lath, and insert a new one, a task requiring time and skill. But Sarah supplied them both. We used to pitch our stumps in the public park. Pitches in those days were not what they are now. Our grass was not mown by a machine. It was nibbled down by a flock of sheep put there to browse before the season started. The wickets were pitched on a fairly steep incline. The batsman at the lower end was in considerable jeopardy and, if in addition to my pads, the rules of the game, or honourable tradition, had sanctioned the use of a breastplate and a vizor, I should have felt more at my ease. The balls we used—save on match days—were made of some composition painted red on the outside. Sometimes the redoubtable Healy would hit with such terrific force that the ball would fly from his bat in two pieces, greatly to the bewilderment of the fieldsmen, and giving rise to a problem which I think has never yet been satisfactorily solved. If the ball after being hit by the batsman break in two,

and a fieldsman catches one of the pieces, is the batsman to be considered "out"? It is a nice question.

Pads and stumps, and bat and ball, and the bag with the floral design that held them, have passed away I know not whither; but I can still see the fire blazing in our kitchen at home and Sarah stitching and contriving, beneath the lamplight, and myself sitting beside her, looking eagerly now at her, now at the things she was making.

THE PHYSICIAN

HE was a physician, and a distinguished one ; a specialist, but without the narrowness that is generally associated with that class. My acquaintance with Dr. Hayes began early ; earlier than I can remember. It was he who ushered me into this vale of tears—he and his coadjutress, the midwife—and it was he who, two or three years later, when I came within an ace of quitting it by reason of an attack of pneumonia, employed all his skill, and all his energy, to prevent that untimely departure. Early in the morning he would drive to our suburb from his house in Clarges Street, before going on to the great hospital where he was a physician, and again, at night, he would return, and we should fight the foe together—he and I—and I believe it was his will, quite as much as his skill, that brought about the victory. Anyhow, because we had been campaigners together, and won a temporary triumph over that shadowy adversary that always

conquers in the end, we became fast friends—Dr. Hayes and I—and I never ceased to love him.

Physicians, as they were called in those days—the word, I think, is obsolete, or obsolescent now—were, of course, much greater people than ordinary doctors, than mere general practitioners. They were only called in, or consulted, in cases of gravity, and something of the lugubrious solemnity of that other professional man, who was sometimes fated to follow them, as a sort of dismal corollary—I mean the undertaker—seemed also to invest the physician's ministrations. Physicians wore black frock-coats and frequently smelt of iodoform, and they were surrounded by an atmosphere of considerable respect. Thomas Crawford Hayes, Master of Arts, Doctor of Medicine, and Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, was no exception to this rule. I loved him, but my love was not unmingled with awe.

He was a man about the middle height, rather spare, and going grey. His features were distinguished, and finely chiselled, and, being clean-shaven, he might have passed for a barrister, or an ecclesiastic. He would have presented an arresting appearance in wig and gown, or crowned with a mitre. His eyes were such as I have seen in no other man. I don't know that I should call them big—perhaps, if anything, they were smaller than the average. But they were extraordinarily expressive, now grave and

searching, now flashing with indignation, now twinkling with merriment, now melting with compassion. But his voice! How shall I describe his voice? He was an Irishman—his people had an ancestral estate somewhere near Roscrea, and the name of it was Sharavogue. But you must not run away with the idea that he had a brogue. No, it was something far less definite than that, something analogous to the flavour imparted to whisky when it is matured in a sherry-cask, something, at all events, that lent a richness to his grave, cultured tones.

When he came out to pay us a mere flying visit, just half-an-hour round about tea-time, he would come in his frock-coat and silk hat. But sometimes, of a Sunday morning, we would start away early, he, my father, and I, for a long day in the Surrey hills, and then he would wear a suit of hay-coloured tweed, of the sort they make at Donegal, with a soft felt hat and a tie of a colour something between dull red and orange. And that is how I love best to remember him.

Once, I remember, we were reading Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar* at school. My father, whose love for me caused him to take an exaggerated view of my intelligence, had spoken rather boastingly, it may be supposed, of my understanding of the play. Dr. Hayes, in order to put the matter to the proof, proceeded to submit me to a pretty thorough examination. Now it

happened that in those days I had an almost uncanny faculty for learning things by heart, especially poetry. I know that memory is one of the lowest of the intellectual attributes—you need not remind me of that, any more than you need tell me that the power to remember is found considerably developed among the lower animals, and even in some mental defectives. Be that as it may, the fact remains that, when I was put upon my *Julius Caesar* trial, I employed my memory with dazzling effect. Nor did I fail on that occasion, to hit the mark in my replies to the general questions—historical, textual, exegetical, etc. In short, I came off with flying colours; and my examiner announced that he would reward me with a prize.

Some days later the prize came. It was a little volume of Plutarch's *Lives*, bound in the cheapest of cloth, and printed in a type that would be quite illegible to my now degenerate eyes. On the back of the cover was displayed an advertisement for somebody's coffee, and it cost precisely sixpence. But to me it is beyond price. I value it as the Greek runner his Crown of Wild Olive, which cost precisely sixpence less. The vandal years have bereft me of many things, including that faculty of learning by heart, and other things which it was even sorer to part withal. Like the Bourbons, I learn nothing, and I forget nothing. Alas, that often, as we grow older, to forget should be more blessed than to remember!

There is one thing for which, above all others, I am grateful to Dr. Hayes, which is that, within the limits of my capacity, I caught from him something of his love of high literature, and especially—after Shakespeare—of Wordsworth, and, strange to say, of Newman. Strange, because he was an agnostic, and a great admirer of Huxley. But he was a Celt, and therefore, despite himself, a visionary and a poet. Every morning—he was an early riser and, winter and summer, he was up and dressed by six—he would read aloud in his beautiful voice, and often to no other audience than his dog, a passage from one of the greater poets. It was his manner of keeping in touch with beautiful and eternal things, the Viaticum, or heavenly food with which he refreshed his spirit, and enabled himself to pass serenely through the dust and turmoil of the working day. It was a habit I endeavoured—alas, with but qualified success—to acquire from him. To read the *Lines written above Tintern Abbey*, or the *Solitary Reaper* in the stillness and beauty of a summer dawn, fills one with a quiet exaltation. There is something hieratic about it, a dedication of the soul, an ablution of the spirit.

Take him for all in all, Dr. Hayes was the most gifted and original mind I have ever known; and he has gone and left no memorial of his greatness behind him. I must be among the last of those who knew him, and in my memory he still lives on. When that frail tenement is

dissolved, it will be as if he had never existed. He died when he was still in the height of his intellectual powers. His body was cremated, and by his express wish, his ashes were taken on board a ship and cast into the sea.

MR. McKEOWN

ALWAYS, on New Year's Day, my thoughts revert to Mr. McKeown, because Mr. McKeown is unforgettable, and because on that day he used to come and take midday dinner with us. My father would have liked him to come on Christmas Day, but that is a festival, a day for merrymaking, and Mr. McKeown was not given to hilarity. His countenance and expression were, indeed, incredibly lugubrious. And yet, though I cannot remember that he ever addressed a single remark to me, I found him vastly diverting. My father, like the Elder Cato, had a weakness for the unhappy. Also, being himself of an enquiring turn of mind, he had a predilection for the mechanically inventive. When, as in the person of Mr. McKeown, these two recommendations were united, the appeal was irresistible. And that was why Mr. McKeown always came to our house to dinner on New Year's Day. My father, I should here observe, would

have been terribly disturbed that anyone should have accounted it a virtue in him that he was compassionate towards the unhappy. Perhaps, in truth, it was not so much a virtue as a weakness. He could not endure the sight of suffering in people or in animals, and if he showed them pity it was as much to ease his pain as theirs.

But to return to Mr. McKeown. He lived, my father used to say, entirely alone, save for a charwoman that came in once or twice a week to "do" for him. He made his own bed, did his own cooking, and even his own washing. He had an exiguous income, without which he would assuredly have succumbed, for, even if he had been capable of the sort of work that people pay for—which, being a genius, he was not—no one would have employed so preternaturally gloomy a being. As *locum tenens* to Charon, as janitor of Hell's portals, he might have found an office worthy of his countenance. None other would have been suited to his inspissated gloom. Your sexton, your funeral mute, were merry fellows compared with him. All day long, shut up in his room, he invented, and invented, and made models of his inventions, which never found a market. Of his mechanical skill, which was prodigious, he used to carry a notable example, on, or rather, in his person. He made his own false teeth! The precious metals—gold or platinum—which customarily form the framework, or chassis, of those implements, were replaced, in his case, by iron! By

what secret, unknown to Vulcan, he succeeded in subduing so intractable a metal to his will, and forced it to conform, albeit imperfectly, to the rugged contour of his jaws, must remain a mystery. Never in the whole of my experience have I known the ingestion and mastication of food to be accompanied by such a surprising series of clanks, and jolts, resembling the locking and unlocking of a prison wicket.

When—in order to please my juvenile brother—the blinds were lowered so that the blue flames about the plum-pudding might writhe and leap with greater effect, Mr. McKeown's visage would take on a spectral hue, as of one rising from the grave, with the mortcloth about him.

One day, when my father came in from his rounds, he announced that Mr. McKeown was dead. He had made a sort of hood like a tea cosy which he pulled down over his face, having placed a handkerchief soaked in chloroform against his mouth and nose. It was his last invention.

THE HORSE RACE

IS it because we are drawing nearer and nearer to the constellation of Hercules—whither, I am told, we are hurrying with unimaginable speed—that we grow so restless and devour the distance with such insatiable hunger? If we go on much longer at this rate we shall girdle the world and be back again at our starting-point before we realise we have left it. All the colours of the spectrum, if you revolve them fast enough, merge into white—that is, no colour. And speed, carried to the *n*th degree of intensity, is—rest.

Fierce extremes in their continuance will not feel themselves. We have outstripped the process of the sun, and soon we may get the news of an earthquake in Tokio, before it has occurred, Time they say, and space, have no existence in themselves. They are merely illusions of our finite minds. Let the great globe and all which it inherit, shrink to the size of a walnut, we should be none the wiser. The lord of it would still

think himself a king of infinite space, and the distance from Charing Cross to Balham would not be changed a whit.

A daring friend of mine who recently flew from Paris to London said he did not seem to be moving at all, till he looked down and saw the shadow of his aeroplane racing across the fields beneath him. When I am conveyed in the luxurious Daimler of my rich friend C——across a whole county, in less time than it would take to drive a horse from Bideford to Appledore, I am not at all impressed by the sense of speed. I know that we have broken the law and travelled an average of fifty miles an hour, because here we are, crossing Trafalgar Square, having left the Sussex shore but some hour and a half ago. But as for the feeling, the sensation of the thing, I travelled far more swiftly the day I triumphed over Bertie on my tricycle-horse.

Perhaps you do not know what a tricycle-horse is. I have not set eyes on one for many a day, and it may be that the species is at last extinct. Well then, to begin with their colour. They were always grey. I was a connoisseur, a "fancier" in the matter of tricycle-horses, and I am sure I should have noticed any exception to this rule. Grey, then, they were. On the other hand, the colour of the saddle and bridle varied. It was usually buff, yet sometimes, if the horse were of Arabian or Persian descent, it might be crimson, or a rich caerulean blue. The saddle was fixed to the horse's back by means

of golden-headed nails ; and golden-headed nails attached the bridle reins to its jaws. Anything in the nature of a bit or curb was dispensed with. They would have been useless.

The steeds were divine, like the horses of Patroclus—you could see that by their flowing tails and drooping manes, the lordly arch of their necks, their fiery eyes, their hoofs that never touched the earth, and above all by the blood-red hue of their ever-distended nostrils. There were no stirrups—why should there have been, seeing that the rider's feet were destined to fit in or upon a pair of pedals attached to the front wheel? These it was, and no bloody spurs, that lent wings to your steed. On the bar that united the two rear wheels, you could take a passenger, who would maintain his equilibrium by clutching you round the neck. But such a passenger terribly increased your responsibilities ; it was indeed

Black
Care at the horseman's back
Perching . . .

I remember—shall I ever forget it?—the day when first my horse dawned upon my view. It was swathed from head to tail in sacking, and every spoke of every wheel was lovingly cased in brown paper neatly tied on with string. When it had been completely disembarrassed from these chrysalis-like encumbrances, and stood forth in all its glory, like one of Phœbus's

courseers, my mother came, and taking my hand in hers, recited—

“My beautiful, my beautiful ! that standest meekly by,
With thy proudly arched and glossy neck, and dark and
fiery eye !”

That poem, “The Arab’s Farewell to his Steed,” was composed by the beautiful and gifted Mrs. Norton who, if I mistake not, was the original of Meredith’s *Diana of the Crossways*. It, and “My Name is Norval,” were favourite pieces for recitation at Young Ladies’ Academies in the days when my mother was a schoolgirl.

“My beautiful, my beautiful,” did not long retain his auroral freshness. Little by little, the mane dwindled and disappeared. As for the tail, that went suddenly. Someone grabbed it as we fled by, and it came away, explosively, in his hand, bringing with it a cloud of white dust, the dried plaster, or cement, with which it had been plugged into its socket. Finally, it suffered a loss which in any mundane steed would have meant death. But my courser was immortal. It survived even the loss of its head, which came off clean, for no apparent reason. No collision, no shock of battle dislodged it. It fell like a ripe peach from the bough, it dropped

like the tower sublime
Of yesterday, which royally did wear
His crown of weeds, but could not even sustain
Some casual shout that broke the silent air,
Or the unimaginable touch of Time.

It was about this time, when my horse had been bereft of tail, of mane, of head, that Bertie's horse came home; a magnificent, refulgent beast, more like to a hulking china dog than a horse. Bertie challenged me to a race. I did not refuse. My mother had been refreshing the furniture of my bedroom with a coating of Aspinall's enamel. The enamel was salmon pink. There was some of it left over in the tin, and I thought with envy of the splendour of my rival's horse. Not to be outdone, I stole the enamel and lavishly covered my steed with it overnight. Next day, the day of the contest, it was still sticky. I rode up to the starting-post. Bertie was there waiting. He laughed a ribald, taunting laugh, as his eye lighted on my roseate steed. The word was given. We started. Boldly we rode and well. We shouted mutual defiance. Terrified nursemaids hurried with their shrieking charges into the first gateway that offered. Yapping curs pursued us, snapping at our legs, trades-boys yelled encouragement and applause. Almost at once, I had forged ahead. I carried less weight. My chin well down over my horse's chest, where once his head had been, I shot past our gate, several lengths in front of Bertie—Sarah was there to cheer me on—and finally won in a canter. . . .

Motors have driven horses off the road—and off the pavement too. The little boys of to-day sit in miniature touring cars, holding on to tiny steering wheels and furiously pedalling with

their little feet. They, too, are the terror of nervous old gentlemen, but I do not fancy they travel so fast as my headless horse.

Later on, the wheel part, or chassis, of my steed was given away to the coachman's little boy. On to it he fixed an old Tate's sugar-box, in which he used to draw his baby brother.

Such was the fate of my horse's terrestrial part. The horse itself was divine, and the end of his sojourn here below was such as befitted an immortal. He was taken up to Olympus in a blaze of fire. The large fireplace in the breakfast-room was the scene of his translation, and Sarah and I were the sole witnesses thereof.

Sometimes, gazing heavenward, when the winds are driving the great grey clouds across the sky, I seem to behold my steed once more, but magnified ten thousand-fold. All, and more than all, his pristine beauties have been restored to him. He has sloughed off his ignoble coat of pink enamel, his mane and tail, more splendid and more luminous than in days of old, float out far and wide upon the wind, his coat of dapple grey is more shining and more glorious than when he dwelt among the sons of men, and still, as formerly on the asphalt pavement in our road, he leads the field in Heaven.

THE COWARD

THE reins which my grandmother used to make were scarlet—scarlet wool, closely knit. I cannot quite remember how they were put on. I know that there were two loops for the shoulders, and that, on the band which went across the chest, were stitched several little brass bells, resembling cockle-shells, but whether they crossed behind and were tied about the waist—I mean of course the “horse’s” waist—I cannot well remember. Scarlet reins you may say are appropriate to Bacchus and his pards, or to Phœbus and his fiery teamsters. Yes, but seeing that I was neither the God of Wine, nor the God of the Sun, I harnessed my reins to my little brother, and drove him about our garden. But please don’t imagine that our garden was an ordinary garden. Ordinary, perhaps, it was in the part near the house. That part consisted of a trim lawn with geometrical beds of conventional flowers, such as you might see in any

public park. In short, it was civilised and civilisation banishes romance.

Romance—the fields of adventure, the land of promise, lay on the other side of the evergreen hedge that shut off the kitchen-garden from the flower-garden. There we had our pond, the home of tadpoles, newts, and water-beetles; there dwelt lizards, frogs in abundance, and a toad, incredibly aged, with jewelled eyes; there we kept our rabbits, and our pigeons—blue rocks, fan-tail, pouter, and I know not what. There, under a spreading willow, was a rustic seat, to which I would lead my little friends. If my elder brother was there, however, he would, like enough, resent the intrusion, and proceeding to make his gargoyle grimaces, cause them to fly in terror to the house. But I am forgetting the reins.

Once, then, for lack of a more fiery steed, I was driving my infant brother about this garden. The brass bells on his chest were jingling, the scarlet reins looked well against the greenery, but the pace was slow, the steed flagged and stumbled. I flicked the whip. By a most unhappy chance, it caught the steed on the bare leg, just above the sock. Before I could stifle the ensuing yell, my father appeared at the top of the steps that led down to the garden. I looked at him—then turned and fled and he came after me. Past the evergreen hedge I sped, round the asparagus bed, in and out among the forcing frames, past the scarlet runners (scarlet

runners!—there were two in the garden that day who merited that appellation!), but, why prolong the agony? My father, panting hard, laid the hand of doom upon me. He took me indoors. . . .

They were having friends to dinner that night. I had seen all the preparations: Keziah cutting up the cucumber, to go with the salmon, into incredibly thin wafers, the cucumber taken with all the dew upon it, little diamond drops of dew, from the frame at the top of the garden; and bottles of wine, white and red, and the port, which my father decanted himself. And I knew my father would let them have some of the port wine in the kitchen and, but for that horrid mischance, I should have sipped some out of Sarah's glass. Yet it was not so much the wine that I regretted, but the lemon-cheese cakes. Those were things for which I would have bartered my soul, only I was too innocent to know that I had one. I would even have let Bertie play with my steam locomotive. And now . . . I lay awake and thought. The glow of the sunset was coming in at the window, the thrushes and the blackbirds had not yet hushed their song, the injured cherub had had some vaseline smeared on his weal, and was now sleeping peacefully in an adjourning cot. If only I had explained! If only I had not run away! If only I had not been a coward! . . . All of a sudden I heard someone coming up the stairs. . . . "Never mind, then," said Sarah as she put the plate of

cheese-cakes down beside me. I flung my arms about her neck and I was not a coward to *her*. I told her all about it. She wiped away my tears.

In the night I had a dream. I dreamt that someone—a man—came into the room and kissed me. He had hair on his face, just like my father, and he smelt of cigars. . . .

MUSIC AND I

I CANNOT truthfully say I remember the "Old House" as we used to call it, the house where I was born. It is too far off for that. I could not have been four years old when we left it. It was dark and melancholy, but in the middle of the garden stood a great pear tree which shone like a fountain in blossoming time, and lit up the world. It bore much fruit, but we saw little of that. We had a sort of *cheval de frise* of broken bottles stuck in mortar along the wall that fringed the road, but that was small protection against your nimble and daring street-arab who would lay his ragged coat, or a piece of sacking, on the murderous indentations and be over and back again with his booty, in the twinkling of an eye.

No, I don't remember much of the house. But one or two things connected with it are indelibly impressed on my recollection. The chief one has to do with music. It was a band ;

a whole orchestra played by one man. After the manner of the Roman Emperors, who concentrated in their sole person the various offices of State, so did this ingenious musician contrive, by attaching noise-producing instruments to divers parts of his anatomy, to make the drum resound, the cymbals clash, the bells tinkle, and the Pan-pipes warble their reedy notes, all at the same time. I can see, even now, the extraordinary distortion of his facial muscles, pulling his eyes almost out of their sockets, as he blew into his Pan-pipes, which were attached by an elastic band to his nether lip like a beard, trying to make them heard above the uproar he himself was creating.

He had an artificial leg, a sort of wooden barrel bound round with copper bands. Both the wooden barrel and the copper bands were polished and burnished like the fittings of a man-o'-war. From the barrel projected a long wooden stem, and the whole presented the appearance of a fat bottle with a preposterously elongated neck. This startling limb protruded from a short knickerbocker, and its nakedness was evidently displayed with eleemosynary anticipations, for his real leg was not thus exposed. A tin mug for the reception of alms was suspended from his neck and hung upon his chest, below the Pan-pipes. On his head he wore a blue peaked cap with a Union Jack stuck in its black braid band, and two more Union Jacks fluttered from each end of the handle of the

perambulator in which he was propelled by a girl attired in neat but well-worn clothes, and hardly tall enough to see over the top of it. What he played I know not, though the tune never varied, but the clash of his cymbals, and the whistle of his pipes and the beat of his drum still ring in my ears down the aisles of Time, and I can see the sunny street with its crowds of people, and the shops, and the gaily coloured tramways, green and red and yellow, and the Blue Favourite omnibus—I can see it all as if it were yesterday, and hear Sarah impatiently telling me to come along and not dawdle so—as if a one-man band were just an ordinary phenomenon.

I thought the art of music could no farther go, and continued so to think until one day I was taken by my mother to the Lord Mayor's Show. We had a window in Cheapside, all draped with crimson and gold, and rows of flags were stretched across the street, and men came along in advance of the procession and scattered gold-dust from a cart on to the roadway. The show has abated some of its splendour since then. Now they only scatter sand.

I sat and waited. Suddenly there was a sound the like of which I had never heard before, so rich it was, so grand, so martial. What a glorious crash of harmony rang and echoed down that narrow street! How proudly those Hussars sat their horses. I had never seen anything so glorious, nor did I, till years afterwards, sleeping in Paris in an hotel overlooking the Tuileries,

I was roused from my slumbers next morning by the sound of military music. I got up and looked out of the window, and behold, a company of cavalry in sky-blue uniforms with silver facings, emerging, with flag flying and music playing, out of the morning mist!

And then, in contrast to this, a day of snow and mist and leaden skies, St. Paul's looming vast and shadowy through the cold, grey light of a January day, and the strange, unearthly strains—so plaintive, so poignant, so pathetic in their almost-joyfulness—of Chopin's "Funeral March," and all the pomp of military glory, and the solemn pageantry of death, as they bore Lord Napier of Magdala to his resting-place.

Later on, my ideas about music underwent a change. I acquired a fondness for stringed instruments and chamber music. My father, as I think I have said, was an enthusiast, but his tastes were classical rather than romantic. Beethoven, Mozart, Handel, Bach, Brahms, were his deities. He was not himself a brilliant executant: he would often stumble and go back and correct himself, yet notwithstanding this, he could "give you an idea" (and that was all he set out to do) of a composition better than anyone I have ever known. He excelled in solemn and stately passages, but when he came to a quick part, with rapid trills and runs, he would brace himself up and play a few bars, keeping up the time *tant bien que mal* and suddenly stop, rather red and out of breath, and say, "and so on, and

so on." He used to take me with him to concerts and oratorios, and we were pretty regular attendants at the Monday "Pops" at the St. James's Hall, where I once heard Joachim play the violin, and often we mounted Highgate Hill to hear Santley at St. Joseph's Retreat.

My mother was not musical, and she looked on my father's devotion to music as a weakness. She had indeed been "taught music" at considerable expense, but she had only brought two tunes away with her from school, which she played to her children and to no one else. She also sang—to the same select audience. But there was music in the way she walked, and in the very turn of her head, and not even bustles or leg-of-mutton sleeves could rob her of that inborn harmony. I wish you could have seen her in her bonnet with the strings tied in a big bow under her chin as she came downstairs of a Sunday morning to take me to church. In those days regular attendance at church on Sunday morning was expected of the doctor's wife. The doctor himself would stay at home and try over a sonata or two, lest, peradventure, a patient should come. . . .

POLLY

PEOPLE in these days, unless they are getting up in years, may be excused for not knowing what a phaëton is, so swift and complete have been the changes brought about by the motor-car. Well then, a phaëton is, or was, a sort of four-wheeled dog-cart, or rather, gig. Two seats in front, and a seat behind for the groom, with a leather hood which you could put up and inadequately cover the two front seats, if it rained. A phaëton was rather a smart affair. I liked yellow wheels and still like them. I think my father did too, but yellow was not a "professional" colour. Our wheels were black "picked out" with thin lines of dark green. When my father was in seeing a patient, Blake—Blake was the groom—got down from his back seat (it was "style" to get down while the phaëton was still in motion), and stood erect and still at the horse's head. He wore a top hat, a green coat with silver buttons, white breeches, and top boots.

He stood at Polly's head. And every now and then he would pass his hand affectionately over Polly's brow, with the white star upon it, and Polly would look at him with a friendly eye and "nuzzle" lovingly against his hand.

I can't tell you how beautiful Polly was. To begin with she was three-parts bred, which is too highly bred I think for a carriage horse. Her coat was chestnut, and shone like silk. She used to come out of our little carriage drive into the road, chiefly on her hind legs. People would shake their heads and say she would be the death of us. But my father knew better. There was a pact between them. My father loved Polly and she loved him. If there was a sound she loved above all others, it was the sound of his voice; if there was a touch, it was the caress of his hand on her beautiful neck. But there was no doubt Polly was fiery. Woe to anyone who should be so misguided as to use the whip to her. Draw the lash never so lightly across her back, and she would leap out like an arrow from a bow. When we drove under the railway arch, how she would fling up her pretty head and "pull"—especially if a train was rumbling along overhead! "Steady, mare, so-ho then, so-ho," my father used to say softly, and she would quiver and half turn her head, and sober down again. But she wasn't easy to pull up when once she got going, as I found to my cost.

Of course I learnt to drive very early, learnt "to handle the ribbons." I had the skill all right,

but as for strength, what will you in a child of twelve, or it might be fourteen? One day I was perched up on the box-seat driving my father down Regent Street. There was a brougham just in front of us. Coachman and footman in powdered hair. Suddenly there was a block and the brougham stopped. I tried to pull up, my father seized the reins, Blake leant forward to help. It was too late. Something—the shaft I suppose—splintered a star in the enamelled back of the magnificent brougham. Polly was plunging wildly, but Blake was down and at her head in an instant, and got her steady again. But it cost us a terrible lot of money. My father drove home.

Polly was not immortal. She never lost her spirit, or her dash, but she grew old and ailing. We sent her out to have a long rest in the country—to Southgate, for Southgate was country in those days. We would go out and see her, and when we called her from the other end of the field, she would lift her starry head on the instant and come trotting towards us.

One day we went to learn that that very morning she had been found dead in the field. I never quite understood why she died. She was very old—but still beautiful. We went and looked our last on her. And when we came away the tears were streaming down my father's face, and down mine.

THE STEAM-TRAM

AT first our road was fairly quiet. Certainly there was a good deal of traffic on it, but it was leisurely and safe traffic for the most part, and sometimes even Arcadian in character. Very early in the morning, the creaking of lumbering farm-wagons would fall pleasantly on one's drowsy ear, and the cries of the drivers shouting at their teams. It was one of the chief highways out of Essex—the land of market-gardens—into London, and heavy wagons, piled high with fruit and vegetables, would pass in long procession along it. I can see them now, making their way to Covent Garden, the morning sunlight lending a glory to their multi-coloured freight. And on Sundays and Bank Holidays, in the silence of the warm summer nights, the echoes would be awakened by the voices of Cockney revellers returning after a “happy day” with the swings and roundabouts at Chingford or High Beach, or some other

popular retreat in the Londoners' paradise of Epping. I can still hear the sound of the concertinas, often played with remarkable virtuosity, wailing out some favourite music-hall ditty. And these strains as they slowly died away in the distance were unutterably mournful.

Years afterwards, I heard a tune that somehow recalled—but with an added poignancy—those far-off airs that used to break the slumbers of my childhood. One evening, in the late autumn of 1914, a long file of reserves were making their way to the barracks—their regimental headquarters—at the top of our hill. A fine, penetrating rain was filtering through the clammy mist as they trudged along, their poor clothes soaked with rain, their boots rustling the sodden leaves that strewn their path. And as they marched, they sang "Hold your hand out, naughty boy," and "It's a long way to Tipperary." It all sounded brave enough as they passed close by; but as they melted into the darkness of the night the sound of their voices faded away into a sort of wail of unfathomable sadness. There were, I dare say, a couple of hundred of them. Poor children, I wonder how many of them guessed the horrors that awaited them, or how many of them saw their homes again?

But the amenities of our road, the road in which my father and mother lived, were rudely and irrevocably destroyed when the steam-trams came. Not that I looked unfavourably on that innovation. By no means. In those days, you

must understand, I was not the unpractical wool-gatherer you see in me to-day. In those days I was, among many other things, an engineer. I have deteriorated since, but at that time I thought there was nothing so fine as an engine, of which I had two of my own, and all those sights that I mentioned just now—the farm wains piled high with the kindly fruits of the earth, why to tell the truth, I wouldn't have given a fig for them, not, I mean, in comparison with a steam-tramway or even a steam-roller. I saw them of course, but I did not know that I saw them. I saw them, because I can see them now, and they move, and will continue to move so long as I live, through the golden glory of those half-remembered dawns.

The rather dull and stupid-looking houses, the front gardens trim and self-complacent in their prosperous suburban pretentiousness—all these things are shrouded in mist, as things redundant, or irrelevant. But the wagons, the faded, almost invisible blues and reds of their paint, their toppling loads, the scent of the hay—they still go on and on, and the blackbirds that piped their matin song in our back garden are singing still in my heart. But in those days, the steam-tramway carried all before it. And that, as the phrase goes, is literally true. The engines, whose mechanism was discreetly veiled by a circumambient skirt of tin reaching nearly to the ground, like the caparison of a processional steed, were as capricious and as stubborn as

mules. They would stand stock still when you wanted them to move, and then, suddenly, without warning, they would leap forward in head-long career, belching forth sulphur, hissing and snorting like some fell dragon, leaving a trail of red-hot embers on the track and striking terror into the hearts of the passengers, and not staying in their frenzied flight until, jumping the point, they ran up on to the pavement. An imposing lamppost that stood upon an island where four roads met was a frequent sufferer from these assaults.

Often, too, a tram would run away down the long steep hill that led to Edmonton, and the passengers would drop off it as it gathered speed ; preferring the chance of a broken limb to the certain death which they deemed (with good reason) awaited them at the bottom. When we heard the continuous clanging of the fatal bell (for thus it gave warning of its approach), we turned pale, for we knew another tram was running away. The splints and bandages were got ready, for it was probable that in a short time a procession of casualties would walk, or be carried, into my father's surgery. Now, I am told, a more silent but even swifter tram has taken the place of those bloody Juggernauts that erst I knew. And if a doctor lives in our house now I expect there are fewer demands on his lint and bandages. The fatal tocsin, precursor of blood and disaster, sounds no more ; but the little boys must have a duller time.

THE NEW BOY

NOW that the woods are robing themselves in crimson and gold and summer is passing like a slow and stately pageant into the shadows of winter, I might be tempted, could I build the lofty rhyme, to lament the transience of earthly things, to echo the *Vanitas vanitatum, omnia vanitas* ! of the preacher. But to be quite frank, my Muse is too prudent to encourage any such ambitious enterprise. She knows too well the mediocrity of my powers to suffer me to fly on borrowed wings too near the sun. And that I suppose is why, this keen and sunny autumn morning, she has called forth from my House of Memories a very humble, nay trivial picture indeed. I am almost ashamed to speak of it. I shall not blame you if you smile a little superciliously when I tell you that this picture is nothing more nor less than a small boy, very shy and cruelly self-conscious, setting out from his father's house on just such a morning as this, to

make his début at a big school in the heart of the metropolis.

We change, they say, completely every seven years, and many times seven years have gone by since the fateful day of which I speak, and the little boy whose image I behold down the vista of the years, like a figure seen through the wrong end of a telescope, has nothing in common with me except the name. It is strange that, although I should know *him*, he, if we came face to face, would assuredly not know *me*. If therefore, I say, for example, "*I* did this, or *I* thought that," I beg you to acquit me of egoism, for the *I*, here present holding this pen, is wholly different from the "*I*" of those far-off days. It was many years ago that he went away, that little boy with his satchel of books and his school cap and his hopes and his fears and his innocence—went I know not whither.

At that time, not having made acquaintance with Horace, I had not learned the wisdom nor acquired the gift of "committing to the gods" all that the future may have in store. Since then I have learned it, perhaps almost too thoroughly. But that night, when I went to bed, I was a prey to the gravest forebodings. The prospect, which had seemed so manly, indeed so noble, all through July and August, had somehow become bleak and wintry. I had come face to face with the Unknown, and my heart was troubled. My slumbers were fitful. I awoke long before it

was light, and sleep disdained, that night, to revisit my eyelids. I turned and tossed on the bed. I told myself again and again it would be all right, and I was never less open to conviction. I tried to think of pleasant things, and it is extraordinary how inviting Home seemed to me just then, the shabby old leather armchair in which my father used to sit and smoke his after-dinner pipe, the comfortable dining-room, the threadbare carpet on which the sun would linger so pleasantly, the old pictures in their tarnished frames. . . . And every now and then, or rather with horrible regularity, a sort of sudden shock took me just below the diaphragm as though I had been kicked in the stomach-part by an invisible foot.

At last it began to grow light. There were noises in the street, the rattle of milk cans, the sound of wheels, the voices of workmen talking as they went to their work. Then I heard Sarah open her door and go quietly down the creaking stairs, and I knew that in half an hour or so she would come and tell me I must get up. And then *The Day*, the dreaded Day would have begun!

I don't know whether I looked pale. Most probably I did. But there is something much worse than looking pale, and that is *feeling* pale. I felt excessively pale, quite white, especially in the abdomen. Sarah, poor soul, had got me a ridiculously lavish breakfast; but the mere sight, let alone the smell, of eggs and bacon sickened

me. Sarah could not make me out, and looked a little crestfallen. But then Sarah was not going for the first time to a great school, with hundreds of boys, and dozens of schoolmasters, terribly learned men with black gowns, a vast building with long corridors and innumerable class-rooms distinguished by letters—some of them Greek letters!—over the doors. Yet, if she had been called on to face such an ordeal, she would have faced it unflinchingly, for Sarah, being practical and not over-imaginative, was no coward. And I was.

My mother looked grave and pensive, and kissed me very tenderly before she sat down to pour out the tea. But that did not move me so much as my father's tragic cheerfulness. He would keep giving me money and making jokes. The pathos of it cut me to the quick. For I knew that he, poor man, was suffering all the torment that I was suffering. It was like jesting at a funeral. I think it would have been a relief to him, it certainly would have been one to me, if he could have discovered an incipient rash on my forehead, some premonitory sign, however uncertain, that I was sickening for something, so that, willy-nilly, I should have to stop at home.

.

It was a long day, that day in Room Z. We had begun on *Ritchie's First Steps in Latin*. I have reason to bless that book. Without it perhaps I should never have made acquaintance

with those lines which, in similar crises, never fail to bring me consolation, as they have brought it, times without number, to all manner of forlorn and suffering souls.

O passi graviora dabit deus his quoque finem.

On that day I had no such resource. Poetry at that time, even had I known any, would not have touched my heart, for my life had been happy, and it is not the happy people who understand poetry. Nevertheless, without the aid of Virgil, I knew the day and its troubles would wear to an end at last. And I fell to thinking about my rabbits, and Old Nell and her litter of puppies, and Polly the chestnut mare. I wondered what Sarah was doing, and I felt sure my mother and father would be very miserable without me at midday dinner—a reflection from which I derived considerable comfort.

Within a day or two I was quite easy in my mind. My mother no longer looked anxious about me; nor did my father deem it necessary to be jocular at breakfast, or to press money upon me. Thus things became quite normal again. I referred to my master nonchalantly as “Sammy.” I upbraided Sarah, with some scorn, because she would not learn from me the Latin for “Table, O Table! of a Table; to a Table; by, with or from a Table,” not being able, she declared, to see the use of the silly stuff. In which, though she knew it not, she agreed with that

eminent philosopher and opponent of classical studies, Master John Locke. Nevertheless when, some time later, I brought home a prize for Latin—the poems of Milton, bound in dark blue polished calf, with the school arms on the cover—how she blazoned my triumph to the world!

MATER SAEVA CUPIDINUM

IT is strange the ease with which Nature, against whom it is our boast to wage successful warfare, engages us in her toils. Man, for all the knowledge he has accumulated through the ages, grows no wiser, and falls blindly into the ancient lure. Earth and sea and sky he subdues to his will, but Love and Death, Erôs and Anterôs, these he can neither conquer nor circumvent.

I had not been schooled in the Lives of the Saints, or I might have known, what the anchorites of the desert knew too well, how often and how disastrously temptation comes to the sons of men in the guise of female beauty. This lesson I was now to learn.

At length, after many years, Sarah and Keziah had quitted our service, and my mother had engaged a new parlourmaid and a new cook. Of the cook I need say no more than that she was a woman of canonical age and, save for an

intermittent and regrettable tendency to seek consolation in the bottle, was an entirely worthy person. She remained within the confines of her own department, and I rarely set eyes on her, having, now that Sarah had departed, small occasion to set foot in the kitchen.

With Tarina, the parlourmaid, it was different. Tarina, you must understand, was not her real name. She was called Tarr—Elizabeth Tarr, and came of respectable parentage, her father being a policeman, "P.C. Tarr." But Tarr was a name that struck my father as hard and cacophonous. He therefore suggested that it should be softened into Tarina, a modification which doubtless occurred to him the more readily as he was at that time engaged in wedding some Italian lyrics he had come across in an old anthology to music of his own composition. My mother, not without a little hesitation, suffered this liberty to be taken with her handmaid's name.

Tarina's duties naturally brought her a good deal into the general eye. Even I, to whom all women, save my mother and Sarah, had hitherto been objects of complete indifference, noted how neat she looked in her white cap and apron, which were of a more coquettish cut than those worn by Sarah and Keziah, and how pleasantly the sunlight played about her wavy hair—so much of it as the aforesaid cap permitted us to see—as she came in with the breakfast coffee of a morning. Nor did I fail to observe inwardly

how engaging were the little ringlets, tiny tendrils of hair, that strayed about the nape of her white neck. And when she stood beside me at dinner, bending a little forward to hand me the dishes, I could not help noticing how dainty and shell-like was her little ear. And behold, I was filled with a vague unrest such as had never visited me when Keziah performed those ministrations.

Ours was Tarina's first "place." She had had no experience. Her neck as yet had been innocent of the yoke. My mother realised that it would be necessary to train her, and she addressed herself kindly but faithfully to the task.

Alas, the mission which my mother thus laudably took upon her shoulders was destined never to be fulfilled, at least by her.

One evening in early June, when Tarina had been with us some three months or so, my parents having gone to dine with some friends in London, I was walking alone in the garden a prey to that dreamy, half-pleasurable melancholy to which young men voluptuously resign themselves, consumed with a longing for they know not what. A glow still lingered in the western sky; darkling a blackbird was piping to his mate; the gravel paths that flanked the lawn glimmered away in the twilight and disappeared into the purple shadows. All at once the back door opened, and I caught sight of something white moving in the gathering dusk. It was Tarina in her cap and apron. She paused and stood

still with the glow of the evening sky upon her upturned face. I know not what subtle influence drew me irresistibly in her direction. Hearing my step upon the path, she turned and our eyes met. . . .

The Fates had woven their web, and snared us in its toils. The crescent moon lay low in the west, shining like a boat of pearl motionless upon a roseate sea. From the cloudless zenith a star looked down. From a lower altitude than the empyrean, another onlooker less compassionate, less silent than the star, also had her eye upon us. Mrs. Pearson, next door, had espied us from her bedroom window, had seen us meet and vanish into the shade of the weeping willow. This she had seen with her little gimlet eyes, and noted with that glow of satisfaction with which the righteous observe the delinquencies of their fellows.

Next morning Mrs. Pearson, her virtue burning within her bosom with a hard gem-like flame, came and recounted her story. What exactly she told my mother I never rightly knew. She probably gave it as her opinion that Tarina was a demon, a spirit of evil, and that her little shoe concealed for certain a cloven foot.

I will not recount all the misery of that dreadful day. Suffice it to say that, that same evening, Tarina's mother, who had been summoned by telegram, came to take her daughter home. I stood at my bedroom window, trying to restrain my sobs, and looked down upon the departure.

I saw her and her mother and her poor wooden box, containing all the things which had been so carefully provided for her start in life. And now . . .

That night I wept bitter tears, wept for the trouble that so suddenly, all unforeseen, had come upon our house. I thought it was cruel of my mother then. But now, when I come to think over it all again, perhaps it was better so. I never saw Tarina again, and after a while I thought of her no more.

THE PRIZE

AT school I acquitted myself with tolerable credit in what are called "literary" subjects, that is to say, in languages, history, literature, and so forth. In mathematics and science, however, it cannot be denied that I was a failure, and so far as my performances in these branches of knowledge were concerned, I should doubtless have appeared more frequently in that "Task Room," as it was called, within whose inhospitable walls the careless and the idle expiated their delinquencies after school hours, had it not been for a gift which I possessed in singular perfection, and which did me signal service in those days—and that was a talent for creating in the minds of my preceptors and those set in authority over me a strong but wholly illusory idea of my industry.

Though, in reality, I was an incorrigible idler, an inveterate day-dreamer, my masters, good easy men, never doubted my diligence. But

as that diligence produced only the poorest of results, I came to be looked on as not a little stupid, a patient but ineffective plodder, a meritorious mediocrity. "Tries hard—a good worker," the poor dupes set down in their reports, adding, with an optimism they could hardly have felt, "Will improve." I think they must have put that in so as to soothe the feelings of my mother, who, as I have already mentioned, regarded me as a genius.

That my appearances in the chemistry class were not more humiliating than they were, I owe to the architect who planned the school and, with results which he for certain never dreamt of, designed this particular room in the form of a semicircle. It sounds strange, incredible, but you could enter that room innocent of any tincture of the lesson you were supposed to have prepared, and yet prove yourself a match for the most inquisitive of masters, if only you had a confederate. All you had to do was to sit with your head well back against the semicircular wall, inclining one ear to it, and then, even though you were at the very extremity of the arc, a whisper sent on its way from the other end of it would travel along, hugging the wall, till it reached its destination in your expectant ear.

Whisper, and I shall hear

was a line fraught, for our chemistry class, with a significance that Piccolomini never dreamt of.

But, as I remarked just now, this strategem could not be carried out without a confederate.

W—— was obliging enough to lend me his all-important services, in exchange for which I used to help him with his Bradley's Latin Prose. If, for example, I was asked to state the equation for producing hydrogen by pouring sulphuric acid on to zinc filings, W——, reading out of the book, would whisper, $\text{Zn} + \text{H}_2\text{SO}_4 = \text{ZnSO}_4 + \text{H}_2$, which gibberish I would repeat with due solemnity to our guileless master.

I won six prizes during the five years I was at that school. 1·2 per annum does not sound ill, but it was nothing—nothing at all compared with the performance of S——witz, a Polish Jew, whose prizes were so many there was hardly room for them in the cab that bore him back after his triumph to his home in Belsize Park.

The reason which led me to put forth efforts, very contrary to my meditative nature, to cull a prize now and again, was that my elder brother, who was at a boarding school, never failed to come home with one at the end of term. He was careful to observe that formality as certain supplementary emoluments and indulgences were dependent on the bringing home of a prize. Now, it is of course the honour of the thing, and not the intrinsic value of the prize, that matters. All right-thinking people know that. My parents knew it perfectly well. Nevertheless, neither they nor anyone else could fail to be impressed with the mean appearance

presented by my brother's prizes compared with the rich but austere magnificence of mine. They certainly had a lot of gilt about them, but the cloth (mine were resplendent in dark blue or dark red calf)—the very cloth, I say, looked cheap and tawdry, the paper was poor, the type battered. They wore, in short, the tragic but unmistakable appearance of "remainders."

One, called *Poems of Cowper*, looked, I remember, miserably shoddy. Alas, my parents did not suspect that those same "prizes" which made so punctual but poverty-stricken an appearance, those same prizes with their edifying titles and copper-plate inscriptions, had not been won by my brother in intellectual striving with his peers, but had been bought by him on the way home with money he set aside for this dubious—and by no means unprofitable—purpose out of his termly allowance of pocket-money. These prizes, it may be observed, were nearly all for French, a circumstance from which my brother derived considerable prestige as one possessed of an exceptional knowledge of that language.

French was a language little called for in our home. My father's knowledge of Greek and Latin was fundamentally sound, though perhaps a little rusty. He was interested in the comparative history of languages, and was a diligent student of Max Müller. Sanskrit, Hebrew, Arabic, even Chinese, he knew something of. He had copies of the New Testament in a variety of different tongues, including Russian. Also,

he possessed a volume containing within its covers the Lord's Prayer in a hundred different languages. Being, as was natural in a medical man, of a scientific turn of mind, he devoted a good deal of attention to German, the more readily as he had an intense admiration for the great German composers. But in French he was not greatly interested.

As for my mother, she spoke no language but her own, but that she spoke divinely. Therefore it was that my brother's French became as it were traditional, legendary, prodigious in our family. It was an accepted fact, and it never occurred to anyone to call it in question. I alone had my doubts which, as being in the secret of the prizes, was not unreasonable. But I held my peace. If it had not been for that fatal visit of the Comte de Bierski, peradventure my brother's reputation as a linguist would have endured till this day. Who the Comte de Bierski was, whence and why he came, I cannot now remember. All I know is that he descended upon us like a bolt from the blue and with ruinous results. Despite his name, which sounds like Russian, he was French, and spoke no intelligible English. Naturally, in this dilemma, my brother, who had suddenly developed a marked taste for solitude, was called downstairs to interpret. He came with reluctance, and was not a success. My mother ascribed his confusion to timidity. She said the dear child was shy. But I knew better.

Parents, I think, attach an altogether disproportionate value to prizes. For my part I know that the things I treasure most, now that I have had experience of life, have nothing to do with parsing or paradigms or the things dear to pedagogues. They are of the stuff that dreams are made on, and I doubt whether they would have earned me a single mark at school, unless it were a bad one for wool-gathering. At school you may win a prize for excellence in a subject whereof, save in the merest examination sense, you are profoundly ignorant. There is Virgil, for example. I remember how H—— shone in Virgil; with what accuracy he construed, how sound he was in grammar; how minutely he had ground up the history of the period. He was held up as an example to us all.

I ran across him many years after we had left school. He had prospered in the world, and had won many prizes—a big income, a fine house, a luxurious motor-car, and so forth. We talked of old times, of school, of the masters, of the other fellows, of his former triumphs. I enquired whether he still kept up his classics, whether he still read his Virgil. He replied, I thought with a touch of impatience, that he had no time for that sort of thing nowadays. And then I knew that, despite his prizes, H—— had never known his Virgil, had never caught across the gulf of time the music of that Voice of Voices. . . . No, I gravely doubt whether prizes have any great significance, and I incline to think

that my brother, in buying his, rated them at their proper value. Prizes—place, preferment, titles—these you may buy, if you have money enough. The things that matter are beyond price. Them you can neither buy nor sell.

THE DRESS-SUIT

IT was not Mrs. Thompson who made me my first dress-suit, for she, poor, patient, suffering soul, had long been sleeping in the arms of the Great Mother when it was deemed that I was of an age to assume the insignia of manhood. Moreover, a dress-suit is a garment of precision, and I doubt, even if she had been alive, whether my mother's optimism would have considered Mrs. Thompson quite equal to the task. My first dress-suit came into my possession when I was about eighteen. It was no ordinary dress-suit. It excited remark, but of this the gods kept me in blissful ignorance. It had this in common with some of our old cathedrals—its constituent parts were not all of the same date nor of the same design, nor again, to be quite frank, were they all of the same material. It is true that they, the three parts, had one attribute in common—their blackness. But even this blackness varied. It may seem strange to talk

about a "pale black," but there is such a thing. My coat was it, and when it was brought into intimate juxtaposition with a really black black, the contrast was evident.

I have said that the three component parts of my first dress-suit were of different periods. That is so. Each constituent was the surviving remnant, the living portion of a dress-suit which *had* been. The coat, which was my father's, offered but little difficulty, for he was of medium, or what I believe is generally known among tailors as "stock size." The waistcoat had belonged to my elder brother, and had been made for him in his lean and lanky adolescence. And as he was leaner and lankier than I, the waistcoat presented one problem, but it was an important one, namely, how to get it to button. But the trousers! There was the rub. The material was splendid. They had the unfathomable blackness of the midnight sky. It was not the material, not the colour that was at fault. But they were big! They had belonged to my great-uncle. Nature had designed him on a generous scale, and he had been twice Mayor of his native town.

Even Mr. Belbin, "Tailor and Professed Trouser-Cutter," as his neat shop-sign announced him—even Mr. Belbin, to whom my mother and I betook ourselves in this grave dilemma, looked momentarily disconcerted as his eye lighted on these surprising trousers, which, as they lay folded, leg to leg, upon his mahogany

counter, presented the appearance of an enormous "V." However, he swiftly recovered his professional *sang-froid* and, with the confidential yet respectful air that was habitual with him, he turned to my mother with a deferential bow, in which I was included, and said, "Leave it to me, Madam."

We left it to him. But apparently the task transcended the ability even of a Professed Trouser-Cutter. When he returned the suit, after the process of adaptation, the trousers could only be persuaded to confine themselves within the exiguous circumference of the waistcoat by being folded into pleats—but the strain on the wearer was tremendous. Nevertheless, I was happy. Some happiness is vulgar. But my happiness was ennobled by suffering.

THE OLD SCHOOL

I WAS happy at school ; but I did not know that I was happy. I did not know how happy I had been till the night of the leaving-supper. Then something knocked at my heart—something like the knocking at the gate in *Macbeth*. It was as the coming in of the real, tangible world, after a dream. Only, in this case, as I now realised, it had been a very pleasant dream. The men who had tried so hard, albeit so unsuccessfully, to instil some rudiments of knowledge into my wool-gathering brain seemed, even then, like figures in some diverting phantasmagoria ; and now, as I look back on them, they appear to me more shadowy, but more winning than before.

But let me correct that. There are one or two who are not winning, one or two who inspired me with fear in those days, but who now merely strike me as quaint, irascible, comic beings who had acquired curious antics by reason, I suppose, of their being shut off from intercourse with men

and women of the world. But S—— was not one of these exceptions. He was entirely amiable. I see him now in his suit of dark blue broadcloth, which fitted his corpulent person like a sheath, forming a striking contrast with the red-gold fringe of silky hair that adorned the base of his dome-like cranium. There was never a crease, never a speck of dust, on that immaculate coat. S—— was remarkable, above all, for the striking conformation of his stomach part. As I have said, he was corpulent. But his abdomen was not curvilinear; it was rectilinear and precipitous, and over the precipice, swaying in the air, hung a prodigious bunch of gold seals.

S——'s ostensible duties were to initiate us into the mysteries of mathematics, but this he had long since abandoned as a hopeless task. The morning he used to spend circumambulating the schoolroom, crooning to himself, under his breath, what I took to be an antique lullaby. This, of course, is only conjecture. Certain, however, it is that, in the afternoon, he *did* sleep, and his nose was not seldom vocal. He did not, it is true, succeed in instilling into our unwilling minds the secrets of the binomial theorem or of those other strange mysteries the very names of which I never rightly knew, much less could repeat at this time of day. But I gathered from him things more valuable than were ever contained within the covers of a Todhunter or a Hamblin Smith. From him I learned the virtue of resignation, from him I learned the seductive

charm of idleness, and the value of that most priceless gift of the gods, the gift of sleep.

S—— has long since crooned his last lullaby, and sleeps now, without rocking, in the bosom of the Great Mother. Peace be to his *manes* and peace to thine, little, pompous, pedantic, and amazingly erudite D——. I hated thee once, but all that is long ago. And yet you might have done me, and nearly did, an irreparable injury. I might have gone through life with as deep and dull and uncomprehending a hatred of Horace and Virgil and the rest of them as that which I conceived for those sacred writers under thy learned—but oh, how unimaginative!—ferule. And yet, for all thy learning, what a simpleton thou wast! 'Tis because in some ways thou so resembledst a little child that I comfort myself with the hope that thy harshnesses have been forgiven thee and that all is well with thee now. If only thou hadst not said, in accordance with that precious rule of thine, “down a place,” when a boy dropped a pencil or whispered to his neighbour when his time came to stand up and construe; if only thou hadst perceived that the real reason of his delinquency was to avoid his turn, what abysmal depths of ignorance thou wouldst have sounded, what criminal lack of preparation thou wouldst have laid bare!

Would that I could portray the attenuated C—— who taught chemistry, or tried to teach it; but who was for ever telling his class, in a

voice that sounded weary and faint from the altitude at which it was uttered, "Boys, you don't work; you don't work!" It was a declaration of sinister accuracy. Would that I could bring before you, in his habit as he lived, old G—— S——, the Alsatian, of the vast and pendulous paunch, like a feather bed, into which, as he shambled along the dim corridors, mischievous urchins would hurl themselves with the velocity of a bolt sped from a catapult. Withdrawing themselves from the soft enveloping folds, they would apologise with mock profuseness to the breathless and infuriated old fellow who, at last, so often did these "accidents" occur, adopted a lateral or crab-like mode of progression.

And then again there was Dr. D—n, whose ability to maintain order amongst the gentle little lambs who formed his flock was in inverse ratio to his learning, which was accounted stupendous. You suffered grievous trials, and have earned that silence and repose for which you yearned so deeply, but which, here on earth, were never yours. In whatever regions you now dwell, I hope no unseemly little ruffians murmur in an undertone "confusedly dispersed" like the magic music in *The Tempest*: "D—n, D—n, D—n, you're a damned funny man."

And can I forget P——, whose mien was so majestic, who always moved as to the measure of some celestial music inaudible to coarser ears? With what grim delight he enjoyed the awe

with which he inspired us. Imposing was his long grey beard, redoubtable the cavernous rumblings of his voice, but most terrible of all was his eye, that eye with its superabundance of white, that baleful eye that never seemed to shut nor ever looked in the same direction as its fellow; so that, sometimes, when deeming yourself well out of his line of vision, you hastily thrust into your mouth a surreptitious brandy ball, you would start with dismay to find that distorted orb fixed on you with a venomous stare.

How can I do justice, O beloved phantom, to thee, O mild and learned H. W. E. ? How can I find words, not indeed to praise—that were impertinent—but simply to record your courtesy, your urbanity, your almost feminine graciousness ! To you it is I owe such fondness for letters as I now possess. You it was who revealed to me the beauties that lie hidden in those signs imprinted on the ample page of knowledge, and which, but for you, would have remained for me to the last ever meaningless and dull. When we were reading with you, the Past and the Present seemed to answer and interpret one another after the manner of majestic antiphons. Was it Milton or Wordsworth we were studying—the great voices of classical antiquity would awaken again and resound anew in the verse of the modern poet. With you to guide me, I descended into the under-world with Aeneas and the Sibyl. With you I sailed the wine-dark sea,

and beheld the graceful shores and shining promontories of Hellas. You never made a scholar of me. That had been beyond even your powers; but you implanted in me a love of letters which has been for me an unfailing source of solace and delight. Like the old gardener of Tarentum, you tilled with patience and with love the most unpromising soil, and made it bring forth some modest fruit where before had been but weeds and tares. With love and reverence I salute thee, sweet and gracious soul. . . . But enough—I hear the old beadle clanging his bell in the playground. The twilight is falling, the lamps are lit in the street, the fallen leaves rustle drearily on the gravel, it is time to be gone.

THE JOURNALIST

MY mother used to think I was a genius. It is a belief commonly entertained by mothers concerning their sons. My mother clung to the idea with extraordinary tenacity, and in the face of the most convincing evidence. I fear she rendered herself not a little unpopular by proclaiming her conviction to the other mothers of her acquaintance. But this was not the worst of the business. The serious thing was that she impressed her belief on me.

Whatever careers any mothers who may read these lines may be contemplating for their sons, let me conjure them not to let them be geniuses. It is a terrible handicap. You see, the world is becoming more mechanised, more standardised, every day—and unless you are content for him to starve, or to exist on charity, your son must fit into some part or other of the machine. And how, pray, if he be a genius, is he going to do that?

How came it that my mother, who combined a very practical character with all her airs and graces—how came she to make so glaring a mistake about me? No doubt it was that in all the practical affairs of life I exhibited an incapacity almost amounting to imbecility. I was dreamy, abstracted, and incurably indolent; but, as I was not definitely and certifiably an idiot, it was clear to her that I must be a genius. True, I fulfilled one part of the character to perfection: I had dreams, and beautiful ones, but no sooner did I try to capture them and set them down in words than all their beauty, all their grace eluded me. Time after time I essayed to grasp the vision of beauty or of sadness ere it vanished, but always my hands were empty. It was very tantalising.

One day I did write something I thought no editor could withstand. I did not know then, as I do now, to what depths of obstinate blindness editors can sink. My piece was entitled "A Morning Reverie." It was a meditation on an old estate on the outskirts of London which was soon to fall a prey to the speculative builder. Into my composition, which I thought very beautiful, and which I wrote with very genuine, and perhaps excessive, emotion, I contrived to drag a passage from Ausonius. Not that I knew anything much about Ausonius, but it was a piece I remembered out of my Fox and Bromley's *Passages for Unseen Translation*, and I hoped that, Ausonius not being a hackneyed author, the

editor might be impressed. He was. He returned my effusion in the stamped, addressed envelope I enclosed. I sent it elsewhere. I kept on sending it. It returned every time with the regularity of a homing pigeon. Everybody in the house could identify the thud of it as it fell on the floor when the postman shoved it through the letter-box, and didn't trouble to go and pick it up.

Fifty times at least I experienced the alternation of hope and sickening dread—and then the unspeakable shock—as if you had been suddenly disembowelled—of seeing *THE THING* lying there once again on the mat. My prestige was at a terribly low ebb, for I had told everyone about it. However, I was destined to regain my position at a bound. I went on writing, but I had learnt prudence. I said nothing about it. At last, under the rubric of “Nature Notes,” a very touching, but exceedingly mendacious, description of how I used to go hunting the blackberry in Epping Forest, appeared in a half-penny evening newspaper called *The Echo*. Going home that evening in the train, I looked round to see how many *Echoes* there were in the carriage. There was one. I scrutinised the owner. He did not look very intelligent. “Little does that fellow sitting there guess that the author of the blackberry article is here right opposite to him,” said I to myself.

I did not contribute any more articles to *The Echo*—it died two weeks later. But it was

an honest *Echo*; it paid me fifteen shillings. Some few months ago, I was rummaging among some old papers, when my eye lighted upon a long envelope addressed to me in my own handwriting. I picked it up and looked inside. It was the "Morning Reverie." Do you know, I can almost understand why those editors . .

THE FATHER

IT was dark when I set out. The stars were shining, but there was no moon. The air was very still. There is no silence like the silence of a city asleep. In the forest, or in the fields, there is always a whisper of grasses, or reeds, or leaves, or the rustle of some creature of the night, stoat or weasel, seeking its prey. But the long street was utterly silent and deserted, and the silence was broken only by the echo of my footsteps on the flagged pavement. I walked quickly, resolutely. My business was urgent. Something strange was going to happen to me. Sarah was there—in my house I mean—Sarah, my beloved old nurse with whom I had been wont to walk when I was a little child and she hardly yet a young woman, my hand clasped in hers, fearing nothing, if she was near, not even Loggar, the lame crossing-sweeper with the red, rheumy eyes and shambling gait, who was the terror of my childish dreams. Sarah, then, grey-

headed now and a "wise woman," as the French say—and, ah how wise, how dear!—had come and awakened me. "Come, Master Jim," she had said—fancy that, to a grown man and the father. . . ! But stay, I anticipate. . . . Well then, I dressed, at the bidding of Sarah, and went forth. I felt inclined to run, but it occurred to me that to run would be undignified, so I walked . . . very quickly.

At last I reached the house, and blew into the speaking-tube, and my heart thumped wildly. "Yes, he was in, yes, he was the doctor, Dr. Kelly, and oh yes, he would come. No, I need not wait. No, thanks, he would carry the bag." His voice was quite calm and steady; indeed, I thought it sounded a little bored, but it was all right, he would come. I went back. There was a grey light in the east, and the sparrows were astir. In somebody's back garden an early blackbird was beginning to pipe.

I opened the door to him and his bag. They went upstairs. Sarah was waiting on the landing. She looked like a middle-aged angel in her gleaming white cap and apron. They went in to her. I waited. There were steps overhead. I heard the sound of muffled voices. I tried to read. I gave it up and paced up and down the room. I sat down again and . . . waited . . . and listened. Again I tried to read. I did read . . . the words. I got up once more and looked out of the window. The sun was nearly up now,

and the sky was a glory of golden rose—the rosy-fingered dawn. And in that space of rose and gold yet hung a star, a solitary star, *stella matutina*—star of the morning.

“Come,” said Sarah; “yes, it’s all right, you may come in, just for a minute.” And I went in.

She was lying propped up a little by pillows. She had on her little blue dressing-jacket, and the wall behind her was a sort of pale amethyst. She looked a little weary as she glanced up at me and smiled. And then as she gazed down again with infinite love on something . . . someone . . . that was lying in her arms, a sort of aureole seemed to encompass her. I looked, and bowed my head, for the ground whereon I stood was holy ground.

Sarah led me from the room.

“Sally!” I cried, as I flung my arms about her.

“Jimmy, darling,” she answered, quite oblivious of my new dignity, thinking I was still her little boy. . . .

THE OLD COAT

YESTERDAY I suffered an irremediable bereavement. I lost an old friend. I bade adieu to my old Norfolk coat. Or, rather, to be quite exact, I was spared the "sadness of farewell," because I was absent when Elizabeth handed it over to some peripatetic merchant of plants, in exchange for what that plausible impostor denominated a hydrangea. I admit that I was angry. I addressed Elizabeth with unprecedented emphasis. I should not have minded so much had it been my new blue serge, I should have minded still less had it been the tail coat and striped trousers which I am forced to indue on ceremonial occasions. To be deprived of these would merely have been—

Some natural sorrow, loss or pain,
That has been or may be again.

Those things have no past, or, at all events, not an interesting one. Any tailor could replace

them for a mere monetary consideration. But my Norfolk was old, it was rich in pleasant memories, it bore, quite unmistakably, "the unimaginable touch of Time." And now it has gone, snatched away by the defiling fingers of some vendor of rootless hydrangeas. It has gone, and, with it, the memories of more than a quarter of a century.

"How could you have done so cruel and thoughtless a thing?" I exclaimed indignantly.

"Thoughtless? Fiddlesticks!" retorted Elizabeth, with a stamp of her little foot. "Thoughtless! Why, the thing was a disgrace. I was positively ashamed to see you in it. You looked like any tramp."

"Elizabeth," I answered in accents of sorrowful reproach, "that old coat which you have so light-heartedly bartered for a showy-looking plant which will certainly wither in a week—that old coat was my dearest possession. It was my remembrancer. About it clustered innumerable memories. I had but to look at it, and lo! as by enchantment there would steal into my mind visions of alder-shaded streams, of whispering woods, of windy heaths and blue horizons. That coat had borne me company in all my wanderings. It had leaned with me over gates and bridges; it had drunk in the scent of the woodfire blazing on the open hearth of many an old English farm-house; it had explored with me many a shy retreat in the heart of the Chilterns and the Cotswolds; it had breathed the keen,

thyme-scented breezes of the Sussex Downs ; it had thrilled to the soft, voluptuous caress of the salt winds that sweep over Cornwall and Devon from the Atlantic ; it had looked on the grey old granges and red-gold wheat-fields of Warwickshire. Nor were its associations of England only. It had tramped with me along the valley of the Loire, it had gazed on the vineyards and châteaux of Touraine, on the mountains of Auvergne, on Arles, Avignon, and turreted Carcassonne. For twenty-five years it had taken with me the thunder and the sunshine, and now—oh, Elizabeth ! How could you ? ”

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That was yesterday. This afternoon Elizabeth came tripping down the lane to meet me. I noticed she was wearing the little pink and creamy muslin frock that I adore.

“ Come,” she said eagerly, “ I’ve got something to show you, something nice—come quickly.” And she hurried me into the house. There, spread over the back of a chair, was a Norfolk coat. It bore an amazing resemblance to what “ that other ” had looked like twenty-five years ago—before, that is to say, it had entered on its career.

“ There, dear ! ” she said, looking up at me pleadingly and smiling through what glistened suspiciously like tears, “ there now, isn’t that heaps nicer than that other shabby, fusty old thing ? ”

“ You little angel, “ I exclaimed, parrying the question with a kiss.

Whatever memories are destined to gather about this new coat, it has certainly begun well, with a lovers’ quarrel and a reconciliation.

THE PUBLISHER

I SUPPOSE I must have been in my very early teens when he came into my world. A little dapper man he was, in those days—he must have been about thirty then—well groomed, well dressed. His hair, parted and brushed with scrupulous care, was something between auburn and sandy. His beard was trimmed to a point. His eyes were big, bluish, and decidedly expressive. Altogether he was not unlike a portrait of Sir Thomas Browne that I have seen in some old print or other. He usually came well before lunch-time on Sundays, and because he was a Devon man he was invited to stay, instead of being dismissed with a glass of sherry and a biscuit, as would probably have been his fate had he come from any other county. But “Johnnie Lane” not only came from Devon, but from our village West Putford on the Torridge, and somehow, in spite of his fine clothes and his spruce appearance, he looked

like a little farmer, which was natural enough seeing all his folk were on the land.

His mother's exertions, aided by the influence of the Reverend Robert Stephen Hawker, the Parson-Poet of Morwenstow, had got him a position as boy-clerk in the Railway Clearing House, at a commencing salary of a pound a week—but by this time he must have been getting as much as four times that amount! Of course, I knew nothing about all these details then, I only knew him as "Little Johnnie Lane" who came from Devon, and who talked a lot about old books, old prints, old furniture, but chiefly about old china. That was his great subject—old china!

It was an association—"Johnnie Lane" and old china—that I couldn't very well forget, because it brought about a tragedy in our peaceful household! If Johnnie had not appeared that day, my father in searching in the cupboard of his bureau for some old book of Devon Worthies he wanted to show his visitor, would not have unearthed that old red teapot that was the cause of so much woe. It was quite a little thing, that teapot, as near to being spherical as the need for standing upright would allow. And it was a deep rich red, of a hue I have never since beheld.

My father, then, in rummaging about for his Book of Worthies, produced the teapot, and put it aside for a moment on a chair. Johnnie set eyes on it, and picking it up, exclaimed: "Why,

Doctor, that's a bit of genuine salt glaze; a very beautiful specimen! It's worth its weight in gold!"

This reaching my mother's ears, the little red teapot was withdrawn from the shy retreat in which it had hitherto spent a safe but inglorious existence, and promoted to a place on the what-not in the drawing-room. Alas, how transient a thing is earthly glory! A few days later, I was prompted by curiosity to examine this "rare and beautiful specimen," and lo, it was bewitched from my fingers by some invisible fairy, and in a second lay in fifty pieces on the floor, like the scattered petals of a crimson rose. I helped my mother piece it together. It took a long while, but by the time we had finished, she had quite forgiven me.

After the tragedy of the teapot, I will ask the gentle reader to imagine the lapse of three or four years. During that interval John Lane had left the Clearing House and set up in partnership with Elkin Mathews as a vendor of rare and choice editions.

If, in those days—I speak of the early nineties—you had turned out of Regent Street—Nash's beautiful Regent Street—into Vigo Street and walked along till you came opposite the entrance to Albany, you would have noticed—where there are now two impenetrable windows of frosted glass—a little bookshop with a brave array of rare editions cunningly displayed to catch the eye of the passing bibliophile. That was

the Bodley Head. It was a little box of a place, lined with books from floor to ceiling. At the far end was a sort of screen, behind which, above a trap-door leading to a cellar, sat the cashier.

Now Elkin Mathews, who had kept a second-hand bookshop in Cathedral Yard, Exeter, was a neat, dapper, little man, rather fussy and old-maidish in his ways. He was clean shaven, with a bald globular head much too large for his body. He did indeed resemble an amœba. Mathews had a sound knowledge of books. He was a genuine bibliophile, and perhaps it was because he was loath to see them depart that he charged such formidable prices for them. He was eminently a man for the desk, for the office. He had a conservative and unenterprising spirit, and the four walls of the little shop, and the books he dusted and arranged with such jealous care, were world enough for him.

Lane was a complete contrast to this—for ever bustling in and out—always somewhere to go, something to see. Sometimes he would rush in with two or three people in his wake—artists, poets, journalists, printers, binders, or Heaven knows whom. Then what a buzz, what a hum of excited conversation! Mathews, secretly regretting Cathedral Yard, Exeter, where such disconcerting irruptions never disturbed the calm of his repose, would hover about on the outskirts of the group, like an ineffective football player vainly endeavouring to push his way into the “scrum.”

But there was another member of the staff to whom the Bodley Head owes a debt whose nature and extent will probably never be fully known, and that was Frederic Chapman, whom John Lane, in the course of his travels, discovered in a Leicester bookshop where, I think, he had the management of a circulating library. Never was John Lane more happily inspired than when he persuaded Frederic Chapman to come to London and join the staff of the Bodley Head. When it comes to defining the duties that fell to his lot, it is difficult to describe them in a word. He was reader, editor, correspondent, and general counsellor. Chapman, the grave and studious Chapman, had read enormously, and possessed a prodigious knowledge of English literature, not only of the main current, but of those lesser tributary streams which are not usually explored save by the specialists in particular periods or subjects. Side by side with this minute and extensive knowledge, he displayed a quality that is not the invariable concomitant of erudition, and that is taste. Fastidious, though without pedantry, he had a delicate appreciation of style and a most sensitive literary conscience. But what probably endeared him to John Lane more than anything else was that he too, was a collector, an antiquary, a lover of old and quaint and beautiful things—china, pewter, prints, furniture and, most of all, books.

His manner, particularly towards strangers and those with whom he had but slight acquaint-

ance, was marked by a reserve that almost amounted to coldness. But beneath the quiet, precise, almost solemn exterior which he presented to the world, he harboured a rich store of humour which he would display, in due place and season, to his intimates.

Frederic Chapman did not depart from this world without leaving behind him some memorials of his scholarship and taste which, for all their slightness, entitle him to a place in literature far above many a more self-assertive and voluminous writer.

Of the circumstances of his private life, of the unswerving resolution and noble self-sacrifice with which he strove, and strove successfully, to discharge certain family liabilities not by himself incurred, I will not here make mention. If ever the story comes to be narrated, Frederic Chapman will justly be looked upon as no less noble a character than Charles Lamb, to whom, in many ways, he bore so close a resemblance. To me he was a loyal and winning friend, and it gives me a sad pleasure thus to salute, across so many sundering years, his grave and gracious spirit. *Ave atque vale!*

But to come back to "Johnnie Lane" with whom I began. One day, a few summers ago, I was driving along the Yeo Vale road (the Yeo is a tributary of the Torridge, into which it flows a mile or so above Bideford Bridge) when there suddenly came in sight, trotting towards me, a little pursey man in a straw wide-awake, riding

a stout bay cob. He looked cheerful and well-to-do, like a farmer who had done a satisfactory deal "in to Bideford market." It was John Lane. And a few weeks later I saw this same bustling little personage, silk-hatted this time, hurrying along Vigo Street with some papers under his arm, his little pointed beard stuck out in front of him, and a very businesslike and important look on his face. And the curious thing is that he seemed to fit admirably into either setting.

It seems strange, incredible almost, that I shall never again see Lane pushing his way along Vigo Street or stepping from a hansom at the entrance to the Bodley Head.

And his ghost—where dwells his ghost now? Down at Hartland, riding in the farm-cart over Bursden Moor, so early in the morning that the light of the lantern on the shaft flickered over the track? or leaning over the river-bank trying to catch trout with his hands as in his boyhood days? Or is he in his beautiful room in Vigo Street, with its leaded panes and its disordered profusion of books and prints and pictures, encumbering the tables and chairs and overflowing on to the floor? Where does he tarry now? I wonder.

THE FAIRY

THE gods, with a malice which they doubtless find highly diverting, are pleased to ordain that those things which we are most fain to do are precisely those which nature has made it difficult or impossible for us to perform. No man was ever less fitted than I to be a public speaker. Yet, if there was one thing I longed to do beyond all others, it was to sway multitudes by the power of the spoken word. It is not merely that I possess a very ordinary exterior, which may be looked upon as a negative disability, but that I exhibit a very positive drawback in the form of a halting and uncertain delivery, an involuntary tendency to indulge in what the grammarians call *aposiopesis* or a sudden breaking off into silence. Now let me say, in parenthesis, that *aposiopesis* is unquestionably a very effective forensic device when under proper control, and used with due discretion, but that when it obtrudes itself out of season, as when you are at a booking-office with less than a minute to

catch the train, and a dozen or so furious people behind you shouting and gesticulating with wrath and impatience, it is distinctly disconcerting.

But all is well if you have a fairy. To those who have met them, who have come under the sweet thralldom of their enchantment, nothing is so foolish or so vain as the scepticism of some people about fairies. I know, my masters, I know by experience. It befell thus. Once upon a time—tales about fairies always begin so—I was asked to deliver a lecture. I, of all people in the world! I, the hopelessly timid! I, the “Stickit Minister,” if ever there was one! I, who had never spoken two sentences in public in my life! I deliver a lecture! O cruel irony!

But it was six months ahead, the lecture. And who could tell, so full of vicissitudes is life, what might not happen in six months’ time. Perhaps a kindly earthquake. . . . But in this instance nothing happened. Never did the appointed diurnal round of this mundane existence seem more certain, or more punctual; never did the march of time appear so regular and ineluctable. As the day slowly, but inexorably, drew nigh, I experienced all the agony that must gnaw at the vitals of the condemned criminal who sees the hour of his execution gradually approaching.

With unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace.

A day or two before, *she* invited me to lunch.

She, you must understand, was the organiser of the lecture. I went, and when I set eyes on her, straightway I knew her for my Friend, my Fairy. My fears fell from me, and I knew that all was well.

When the night of the lecture came, my Fairy was there beside me, and, to a room gorged with people, I spoke *ex tempore* for more than an hour. Cinderella's fairy, with her enchanted wand, turned a pumpkin into a coach. Mine wrought a marvel greater still, and made of me an orator.

Alas, I saw her but three or four times after that. And then I learned that I should behold her on earth no more. But it is not with fairies as with ordinary mortals. Fairies may disappear, but the spell they weave never dies. So it is with my Fairy. She forsakes not the haunts she loved. In the sounding city, or in her home amid the silent hills, she lives on, present though invisible. And she lives on in a dwelling to her still more dear—in the hearts of those she loved and by whom she was beloved.

As for me, when I have some more than ordinary task to perform, when I am put on my mettle, I try to acquit myself well, as years ago I tried at my first lecture, *because of her*. And when I am tempted as, being but human, I sometimes am, to do a foolish or ungenerous deed; that deed, if I think of my Fairy in time, is left undone. For nothing is more hard to bear than the look of wonder and sorrow in her eyes, beneath her crown of black, imperious hair.

THE WIZARD

I DON'T know how I recognised him for a wizard—that is to say an enchanter—but I *did*, and that immediately, despite his disguise, for he was wearing a dark blue suit and a grey trilby, just like a mortal. Of course I had something to go on. I knew that enchantment ran in the family. For his sister was—and is—my Fairy. So you see there was what the learned people who know Latin call an *a priori* reason . . . an antecedent probability. His mother, they say, casting an anxious glance upon her new-born offspring, marvelled how she could have so offended the gods that they had sent her so plain a child. She looked again, and praised the gods, for she knew him for a genius. She knew it because, this time, she had looked into his eyes and seen a whole world of beneficent and impish spirits a-dance there—mischief and laughter and love and pity, aye, and wrath too, but much more pity than wrath, and tears and smiles, sometimes

sad and sometimes merry, and, above all, *dreams*. And when she saw the dreams—that is to say poetry—she knew not whether to laugh or to weep, for she knew that her child would be both happy and unhappy, now in the skies, now in the depths. She knew that the outstretched arm of a beggar would be a barrier he would never pass, that he might be rich, and he might be poor, perhaps one and the other by turns, and that when rich he would at once set about becoming poor by lavishing his goods upon his friends.

After a while his father's business ceased to prosper, wherein the fates were not so unkind as it might seem. If it had prospered, he, my wizard, would have been a lawyer (such was the paternal design), and where then would have been his gibes, his gambols, his flashes of merri-ment? They tried him in an office.

Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy.

He recited Swinburne to his fellow clerks, and each and all of them lay down their pens, pushed aside their ledgers, and sat spell-bound, head in hand, gazing into space. The charm was upon them. He did not stay long in that office. The Muses were watching over their child. They saw to it that he got the sack. Then he became a reciter. A famous old actor heard him and exclaimed in his mother's hearing, "Egad, I should like to have the training of that boy!"

“You shall,” replied his mother promptly, and that was how he became a mummer.

And never was mumming so sad
And never was mumming so gay.

Give him a few coloured rags, a daub or two of grease-paint, and he will create you a kingdom and he'll be the King on't—or the Jester. He'll laugh, or he'll weep. He'll smile, or he'll frown. He'll caper with joy, or languish with sorrow. He'll don the tragic buskin and walk the stage a Monarch or a Hero. But give him the Cap and Bells and the Motley and he'll charm you with his wise folly, for he too is a fellow of infinite jest and most excellent fancy.

C— W—

HE was, as they say, one of the old school, and whenever he came to visit us he brought a bouquet of flowers for my mother. It was an education in manners to see the grace with which he bestowed and she received them. More than once though, as she went out of the room to fetch a vase and some water to put them in, I heard her sigh and murmur that she wished he would not do it, poor man, for he had plenty of ways for his money. It was probably true, but that only made the gifts more rich. You could see, from the care with which she arranged them, that that consideration had not escaped my mother.

Our dining-room was a large room, with three tall French windows looking on to the garden. The middle pair opened on to a flight of steps leading down to the lawn. Heavy rep curtains of dark red hung from a long brass pole with great brass pineapples at each end. The walls were painted a sort of warm buff colour and

adorned with engravings after Landseer. There were two good oil-paintings in tarnished but beautifully moulded gilt frames. One, a wintry scene in Holland—a few leafless trees, and a frozen expanse of water with figures in bright, but mellow, blues and reds to relieve the greyness—was by Hughes, the pre-Raphaelite; and a full-length silhouette of my grandfather, the rector, hung above a mahogany sofa upholstered in horsehair, with horsehair bolsters at each end. Down the centre of the room ran an old oak refectory table, whose surface shone like a mirror. It came from our home in Devon—Julian Putford. Such was the scene in which Mr. W——, wearing his neat, dark-grey tweed suit, and black foulard with white spots, would appear with his flowers, and make his courtly bow. He was a little man, nearly bald, with a fringe of fair hair that had turned to silver, and a small, close-cropped, white moustache. His skin was very fair, a delicate pink and white, and made you think of mother-of-pearl.

In the flower of his early manhood, while yet his barque was sailing with Hope at the prow and Pleasure at the helm, C—— W—— married a lady in whom beauty of form and feature were united to consummate grace of manner, a manner characterised by that utter naturalness which is a seed planted by the gods, and nurtured and brought to perfection in an environment (for her family was old and distinguished) of long and honourable tradition. It was a passport

that made her free of any society, however exclusive.

Sometimes C—— W—— would come and stay the night at our house. And then, in the evening, my mother would light the candles at the piano and my father would sit down and accompany him, and he would sing in a tenor, light but infinitely true and sweet, "The Thorn" and "Gentle Shepherd" and "Thine is my heart" and "Songs of Araby."

He went through his long life with his soul unspotted as a child's. The outward man, always so fastidiously neat and clean, was a fitting habitation for so innocent and stainless a spirit. He lived till the eve of his ninetieth birthday. On the afternoon of the day that preceded his death, he sat up in his bed and sang in a voice strangely sweet and clear, "Oh dear, what can the matter be." That evening he said his prayers to his wife, as usual. Then, a little while afterwards, forgetting he had said them, he called her in to "hear" him again. This happened yet a third time. Then he went to sleep. . . .

LENTULUS

TO-DAY, for some unaccountable reason, my mind has been running much on Lentulus. I know not whether my Lentulus is to be identified with that member of the Catiline conspiracy who, when questioned by Sulla as to what he had done with certain moneys received by him in Cisalpine Gaul, extended—not his tongue—but his *leg* in token of his scorn for his interrogator. The Lentulus whom I knew was one of the *dramatis personæ* in my first Latin exercise-book. He was one of those with whom, in my infancy, I ventured on my first little faltering steps along that difficult road the *Via Latina*. And I think the reason why he impressed himself more vividly on my memory than any of his brother Romans, was that he had one inveterate, unfailing habit; one characteristic trait that reappeared with the punctual and ineluctable regularity of the stars in their courses : *he denied everything*. No matter what views were propounded in his

presence, or by whom they were enunciated, he denied them ; and the more optimistic and complimentary they were, the greater was the vigour of his negation.

Did anyone aver that "Cæsar was a great general," Lentulus would deny it flatly. He was no partisan, for whoso made a similar statement concerning Pompey, or Mark Antony or Octavius would be met with a denial no less uncompromising. Phrases with which suffering humanity sometimes pathetically endeavours to put a good face on things, such as "The winter will soon be over," or "It is rumoured that the Senate are about to reduce the Income Tax," received short and bitter shrift from Lentulus. Nor was his unbelief restricted to matters of opinion or conjecture. Did Balbus state a plain fact, such as, "The city has been surrounded by a wall," he would fold his arms and calmly deny it.

After a lapse of forty years, I fell in with Lentulus again. He was still connected with the teaching profession. He was in fact a school-master. But though he had taken the name of McTaggart and assumed the outward form of a Scottish pedagogue, I penetrated his disguise, I recognised him at once. His ragged goatee beard and his Fifeshire accent did not deceive *me*. He was Lentulus right enough. He denied everything. Optimistic meteorological prognostications especially incensed him, and he would demonstrate with the certitude of one

triumphantly establishing a mathematical truth, that it would never clear up, and that the rain, hail, snow, fog, or whatever scourge was prevailing at the time, would never cease.

One glorious spring day, when the larks were singing in a cloudless sky, I fell in with Lentulus, and remarked on the beauty of the view. He denied that the view was beautiful, and then, pointing a scornful finger at Harrow with its spire rising out of the aerial blue, he added bitterly—"Yon hillock giving itself the airs of a mountain!"

Once an old friend of mine—also from Fife—came to spend a few days with me. I presented him to Lentulus, thinking that their common fatherland would infallibly provide a subject on which they would agree. I left them to themselves in my garden, and went in to write a letter. Soon I heard voices raised in anger. I looked out, and there they were, exhibiting the unmistakable signs—protruding eyes, bristling moustaches, tense attitude—of persons engaged in acrimonious disputation. Lentulus had denied that the bowling green at Auchtermuchty was superior to the bowling green at Markinch, and my guest had as stoutly denied the contrary. Having pacified the combatants somewhat after the manner of Mr. Dowlas, the diplomatic landlord of the Rainbow Inn, by saying that "they were both right—and both wrong," I took my friend indoors with me, out of harm's way.

The fact is, there are many Lentuluses up and down the world. And well it is that it should be so. They have their uses, nay, they are necessary. For, look you, they are the nitrogen in the atmosphere, without which we might be tempted to try to jump over the moon; they are the ballast that keeps the ship on an even keel; they are the brake upon the wheel. How salutary it were if, when tempted to pursue some deceitful will-o'-the-wisp, to embark on some chimerical enterprise or, Icarus-like, to fly too near the sun, we had a Lentulus to sound a timely negation in our ear, so that, between the two opposing forces, we might keep to the golden mean, the "*aurea mediocritas*" of the Roman poet.

My Lentulus was stubborn; he obstinately maintained his own point of view and steadily ignored yours, but he was as brave as a lion and as honest as the noonday, and when he departed for ever, I realised, to the full, how I loved him. They told him he was ill. He denied it. They were right—and that was more than he could bear.

SOME BARDS OF THE NINETIES

IT was away back in the early nineties that I first made acquaintance with the Bodley Head ; that golden time, when the yet unwidened Strand was lit by gas-lamps, when the Tivoli was still a music-hall, and Lettie Lind and Sylvia Grey and Fred Leslie and E. J. Lonnen still sang and blithely footed it on the old Gaiety stage ; when Mrs. Ormiston Chant, vigilant custodian of our morals, was abroad in the land and the poems of Sir Lewis Morris, the bard-in-chief of the British matron, were to be found on the what-not in every suburban drawing-room. It is, in fact, long time ago, and yet it seems sometimes like yesterday, that I made my debut in the little box of a place that was then the Bodley Head. My parents, fondly imagining they discerned in me a nascent literary talent which only needed congenial surroundings to flourish triumphantly, took counsel with John Lane, an old friend, who had been nurtured in the same Devon village as

my father, with the result that I was given a position—without emoluments—in the publishing house of Elkin Mathews and John Lane. There I advanced my literary education by addressing the firm's envelopes. I served my articles to the Muses, I made acquaintance with the poets by stacking their works as they came in from the binders ! But, though I did little, I kept my eyes and ears open. I saw and heard many people whose names are inscribed in the roll of fame. Sometimes they even condescended to speak to me, and not on business !

And did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you ?

My Shelley was Richard Le Gallienne—Narcissus ! His pale chiselled features, shadowed by long, wavy, raven-black hair, gave him the air of a Greek god, and it was not easy—at first—to converse with him as with an ordinary mortal, one felt “strained to the height in the colloquy.” It seemed strange, moreover, that one so præternaturally beautiful should travel to and from his home—he lived in Brentford—in mundane omnibuses and trains just like any member of the *profanum vulgus*, and still more remarkable that he should have been born on the banks of the Mersey and not on the shores of Hellas. He himself was not, it would seem, altogether unconscious of the godlike attributes of form and feature with which Nature had

endowed him, for he affected a style of dress designed as far as possible to indicate his aloofness from the common herd. He wore, like the Scholar Gipsy, a hat of antique shape and a soft abstracted air. His coat was of dark green velvet, his shirt and collar, à la Byron, of some soft grey material, his tie, the hue of willow leaves in the wind, was loosely flowing. Such were his upper garments.

The integuments of the lower, or earthward parts, were a concession to ordinary humanity, a symbol of godlike condescension—he wore trousers! I speak with authority concerning these details, because I was so carried away with admiration for the poet that I went so far as to imitate his sartorial eccentricities. The experiment was hardly a success. My features are, I hope, honest, but few would call them heroic. Moreover, I could not afford velvet. My coat was made of flannel—green flannel.

Le Gallienne eventually went to America, and Vigo Street and the Café Royal knew him no more. Max Beerbohm gave melodious utterance to our sorrow in strains that run, so far as my faulty memory goes, something like this:

You haunt those American bars,
But Pan calls you home with his pipes ;
We all know your love of the stars,
But what *can* you see in the stripes ?

He seems to be happy there ; nevertheless, his

heart I think is still in England, in the England of the nineties.

"You will see I have not forgotten those old Bodley Head days," he once confided to his first publisher. "Indeed," he added, "I am growing pathetically faithful as I grow older; and that wonderful old past grows more and more a religion with me. If I could draw, I would make you a Bodley Head with a halo (of romance, not sanctity) around it." But the poet occasionally steals back again to revisit the scenes of his early triumphs.

In the autumn of 1926, and after a lapse of more than thirty years, I saw Richard Le Gallienne again, as he was passing through London on his way to the South of France. Time has dealt not unkindly with the Narcissus of the nineties. He has aged, but he has aged gracefully. His hair is shorter than it used to be, and grey, but not a whit less luxuriant. His shoulders have a friendly stoop about them. His eyes are kind and gentle. To the good looks of his youth, Time and experience have lent an added distinction and a sedate urbanity of bearing. His mind is a storehouse of memories both grave and gay. The company (there was a little dinner in his honour) talked a great deal about poetry and poets both Bodley and pre-Bodley, and the air was thick with quotations. Le Gallienne spoke of Matthew Arnold. "The finest lines he ever wrote," he said, "are . . ." and he hesitated

a moment. "I hope," I broke in, "you mean these," and I began to quote:

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full and round earth's shore,
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd,
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

"Precisely," he said, when we had finished; for we had recited them in unison—enthusiastically. "But how strange. . . ." "Perhaps," I interrupted, "it was a lesson I learnt from you in the nineties."

A striking contrast to Richard Le Gallienne was John Davidson. Short, stocky, clad in homespun, there was little about his external appearance to suggest the child of the Muses, save his eyes, which were dark and singularly expressive. His manner was alert and full of suppressed energy. His "note" was a manly independence combined with a contemptuous indifference for the veneers, the shams, the effeminate affectations of fashionable society. The first volume of *Fleet Street Eclogues* had been greeted with considerable enthusiasm when I first knew him, and he was writing a series of topographical and nature sketches, which were afterwards gathered together in a little volume bound in rose-coloured Irish linen with a cover design and frontispiece by Laurence Housman,

entitled *A Random Itinerary*, at the end of which was included, rather incongruously, "The Ballad of a Musician."

These sketches were descriptive of walks he had been taking round London at a radius of eight or ten miles from Charing Cross, on some of which he invited me to accompany him. The material *viaticum* was plain—sandwiches or pasties in a knapsack, eaten on an alehouse bench and washed down with wholesome bitter; but the conversation was high, and mostly about poets and poetry for which he had an extraordinary memory. "Every man," he said to me once, "should make his own anthology and carry it here"—pointing to his forehead. I took the lesson to heart and have never regretted it. Afterwards, "his piping took a troubled sound." His Muse became crabbed and tedious, and his end, as everybody knows, was tragic; but in those days there was no hint of the shadow that was to fall across his path.

There are many other people—artists, poets, essayists, whose image I can dimly recall: Norman Gale, schoolmaster and poet, the author of *Orchard Songs*, a big florid man, who blew on a slender but tuneful reed, little, discreetly fleshly songs; Lionel Johnson, a strangely diminutive person with delicate, regular features and dainty hands; and Ernest Dowson, hollow-cheeked and sunken-eyed, obsessed by his passion for the Soho restaurant-keeper's daughter who jilted him—for the waiter!

In those days too Oscar Wilde was a pretty frequent visitor at the Bodley Head. One day I remember in particular. *The Sphinx* had just been published, and Wilde—heavy-jowled and wearing a carnation in his buttonhole—came in and sat down at Mathews's table to examine a copy. It was a beautiful slim book in white vellum with a cover design in gold by Charles Ricketts. The pages, of luxurious hand-made paper, were of course uncut, and Wilde asked for a paper-knife. He was handed the office paper-knife—a clumsy wooden implement—which he surveyed with horror and disgust, and a delicate ivory blade had to be sent for from a neighbouring shop in Bond Street. Opinions may differ as to whether Wilde was a poet; but he was unquestionably a wit. "Do you call that poetry, Mr. Wilde?" counsel asked of him with bitter scorn as he finished reading an excerpt from *The Sphinx* during the famous trial. "Not as you read it, Mr. Carson," came the swift and crushing retort. Pretty good for a man who knew the game was up and felt the ground failing beneath his feet.

Whom next do I discern amid the shades. An immaculately dressed personage in a frock-coat and high stiff collar. He is seated in the drawing-room full of guests at 8 Lancaster Gate Terrace close to his hostess, Mrs. John Lane. He is clearly somewhat of a lion. He might be a member of the diplomatic service or a distinguished M.P.; indeed, anything but what he is,

namely a poet. He is William Watson, the author of *Wordsworth's Grave* and *Lachrymae Musarum*. Watson's muse was dignified and sedate. She moved to slow and stately music ;

Vera incessu patuit dea.

I wonder how many people read Watson now. He was a poet in the high classical tradition, with a great reverence for beauty of form. But he was perhaps not very original. W. E. Henley once referred to him as a Distinguished Echo. Perhaps that sums him up as well as possible. A Distinguished and a Delightful—Echo.

Then there was Stephen Phillips. Never was poet so preposterously praised and so preposterously neglected. In the hey-day of his fame as a dramatist, Stephen Phillips was freely compared with Sophocles and Shakespeare, to the implied prejudice of the two latter. Once as many as four of his plays were running simultaneously in London. There was a time when 10,000 copies of a volume by Stephen Phillips would be subscribed for before publication. I should imagine that such a demand was never before experienced by any poet. Probably at no period had poetry ever been so popular—not even in Tennyson's days.

The time was to come when he, who had been described as the finest dramatic poet we have had since Shakespeare, came to walking wearily about London hawking his poems for shillings to anyone who was charitable enough to buy

them. Once, it is recorded, he went into the office of the *Penny Illustrated Paper* with a poem. He was asked how much he wanted for it. "Five shillings, I suppose," was the reply. They gave him a sovereign, but suppressed the poem.

Phillips has been described as fatally generous, totally unbusinesslike. Generous he certainly was! One day, when he was at the very end of his tether, he received a most timely cheque, and immediately went out to cash it. "He returned," says the friend who told this story, "with a smile as sunny as though it had been magically doubled, instead of which a wily old back-street merchant had pitched him a tale of woe about a sick wife, and had had his pity, and his money. When Phillips was told that the said wife did not exist, he simply answered that "Anyway, the man made her seem alive."

These poets of the nineties, most of them at least, had one great asset—they had to struggle with adversity, and their careers, as the world judges careers, were disastrous in one way or another. That is an immense advantage for a poet. It is half the battle. A well-to-do poet, a poet in comfortable circumstances, is a contradiction in terms. But our friends, most of them, escaped this bourgeois fate. One of them committed suicide, another succumbed to phthisis in a bricklayer's cottage at Catford, another died poor and forsaken in Paris, another went to America, and another became a professor in a provincial university.

Though they were lovable fellows in their way, they were not always easy to get on with. They would take offence at trifles or at nothing. The *genus irritabile* have always enjoyed this privilege. Their publisher—who was really a father to them—had a lot to put up with. One day there was an alarming commotion in Lane's room; a ringing voice raised in anger, answered by mild expostulatory tones, and finally a noise of crashing furniture followed by the exit of an indignant poet, his "eye in a fine frenzy rolling." "Ah well," said Lane philosophically as he surveyed the *disjecta membra* of a little table that the poet had hurled against the opposite wall, "that is the sort of sacrifice ordinary folk have to pay to genius."

Not only were they easily moved to wrath; they were, to a man, terribly reckless in matters of finance. They seemed to hold with Lamb's friend Bigod that "money kept longer than three days stinks." The consequence was they were usually insolvent. When they had obtained from John Lane, their publisher, their "father and brother" as Le Gallienne called him, money for all the poems they had written and for many they promised to write and generally didn't,

Stretching a hand thro' Time to catch
The far-off interest of tears,

they were sometimes forced to lend their dress clothes—for a consideration—to another and more exacting relative.

There was an attempt—which met with only indifferent success—to bring these poets together in a cenacle or club. The members of this association, which was formally christened “The Rhymers’ Club,” used to meet (according to Mr. Arthur Symons) in an upper room of “The Cheshire Cheese,” where long clay pipes lay in slim heaps on the wooden tables between tankards of ale; and young poets, then very young, recited their own verses to one another with a desperate and ineffectual attempt to get into key with the Latin Quarter. I do not know whether all the members who contributed to the two *Books of the Rhymers’ Club* (which are now among the rarities of literature) were in the habit of attending the meetings at “The Cheshire Cheese.” If so, they must have formed a somewhat heterogeneous gathering. The Rhymers’ Club lasted two or three years, and then “ceased upon the midnight with no pain.”

Strangely enough, I have few personal memories to recall of the greatest poet of the nineties. Into whatever depths of silence and oblivion Watson and Davidson may fall, one thing is certain, and that is that no such fate will overtake Francis Thompson. Poor, broken, starving, laudanum-drinking outcast, this ex-medical student, newspaper-hawker and cab-tout, wrote poetry that places him for ever among the immortals. If his feet were in the gutter his eyes were on the stars.

Just as I thought to close this article, another

poet of the nineties steals into my memory. Who, indeed, could forget for long the sweet and graceful Muse of Victor Plarr, who piped his delightful strains *In Dorian Mood*? The gods were kind to Victor Plarr. In the evening of his days he was translated to the studious calm of a library—the library of the Royal College of Surgeons in Lincoln's Inn, over which he presided with grave and winning courtesy. It was three years since I saw Victor Plarr, and I was meditating a visit to him when a paragraph in the newspaper told me I should behold him no more on this side of the Styx. Does he, I wonder, bethink him now, wandering in those serene abodes,

Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly,

of the mildly riotous nights he spent in that upper chamber at "The Cheshire Cheese," with his fellow bards of "The Rhymers' Club"?

THE BOOKSELLER

TO-DAY I rescued a treasure from a box of miscellaneous books in the Charing Cross Road. Clearly its owner did not regard it as a treasure, for the box, exposed to wind and weather, bore a label reading, "All these books 3*d.* each." The book that caught my eye was a volume of lyrics entitled *Orchard Songs*, by Norman Gale, who tuned, in the nineties, a melodious pseudo-rustic and—for those Victorian days—somewhat fleshly reed, about new-mown hay and lilac blossom and amorous shepherds and snowy-breasted dairy-maids. But it was not for these poems that I looked on the book as a treasure. I valued it because it made me think of Elkin Mathews, and for me to think of Elkin Mathews is to think of my youth and of those golden days (so at least they shine in retrospect) when I served my apprenticeship to the Muses, in that little second-hand bookshop which was the original Bodley Head in Vigo Street.

It was, on the whole, an ill wind for little Mathews that caught him up and whisked him away from the cloistral calm of the Cathedral Yard in Exeter, to deposit him in the heart of the Metropolis. Not but what Vigo Street was quiet enough in those days. For one thing there were posts across it then, debarring wheeled traffic from going past the entrance to Albany. There were no motor horns to startle you from your dreams ; nothing louder than the trot of a hansom-cab horse and the airy jingle of its bells ; for, when silent rubber tyres came in, the cab-horses generally had bells to signal their approach. We took care of our pedestrians in those days.

It was not so much the noise and the bustle of the Metropolis that told on Mathews ; but—well, to be quite plain, it was the effort of keeping up with Lane. Lane was full of energy ; Lane had ambitions ; Lane intended to “ arrive,” and arrive he did. But Mathews could not stay the course. He only wanted to be left alone, to catalogue his books and, since he had to live, to sell them as dearly as possible. Lane’s ideas soared higher. He was, as we know, a collector of books, prints, glass, pictures, of everything—but these loves were ancillary to another love which transcended them all, and that was his love of life, of society. He was in short an extremely clubable man, with great social gifts, and possessed of a tact which, when he liked to exercise it, enabled him to “ hit it off” with every-

body. He was courageous, not in the least shy, and, consequently, a great success with women.

Mathews was the reverse of all this. He had none of these ingratiating gifts. People frightened him. He was excessively timid, and women set up a terrible commotion in his bosom. I remember one voluble, voluminous and rather overpowering female who used frequently to sail into the shop. She called herself by some sort of foreign title, and was a friend of Mathews. She used to mesmerise him, to fascinate him with terror, and reduce him to a condition of pitiable and stammering obsequiousness. But Mathews followed the example of Quintus Fabius Maximus. He avoided an engagement, and carried on his delaying tactics for so long that she eventually abandoned the pursuit.

But in that little box of a place in Vigo Street, Mathews had a retreat, a safe and secret one, a hiding-place to which, when pressed by unwelcome or importunate visitors, he would flee like a fox to his lair.

At the far end of the little shop, facing you as you went in, rose up, five or six feet from the ground, a sort of screen extending three-parts of the way across the room. The front of this screen, opposite the shop door, was fitted with shelves full of books; behind it was a long sloping desk at which, perched on stools, sat the cashier and his assistant. There was a space of some four or five feet, a sort of *ruelle* or alley, between the screen and the far wall. Just under

the cashier's stool was a trap-door which gave access to some wooden steps leading down to a dark and noisome cellar, which was, in fact, to employ the common euphemism, the "lavatory" of the establishment. It also contained a hand-basin in a mahogany cabinet with a zinc receptacle underneath to catch the dirty water, which overflowed and lay in puddles on the floor. No light of day ever penetrated into the Stygian gloom of that hideous dungeon. He whom "bitter constraint and sad occasion dear" compelled to descend into its depths, went armed with a guttering candle whose feeble glimmer only made the darkness visible—and more horrible. I believed it to be haunted by rats, gigantic spiders and all manner of hideous creeping things. Perhaps that was only my imagination. What was *not* imaginary was the mephitic odour that pervaded it. How we all escaped fever and pestilence, I know not. Here then it was, in this

dark opprobrious den of shame,

that Mathews would seek for refuge, and wait patiently till a tap from overhead should tell him that the peril had departed.

One day, I remember, Mathews came in after lunch and, having spied an unwelcome visitor in the offing, descended hastily into the underworld. Hot on his tracks, the visitor arrived, having no doubt seen Mathews come in just before him. They told him Mathews was out.

Knowing this to be a fiction he said he would wait, and sat down. He did wait. After a time he grew impatient, and began walking up and down the little shop like a caged beast. And at every turn, he strode closer to the partition behind which he was sure Mathews was lurking. At last he came right opposite the entrance. He looked hard and long. Only the cashier and the clerk were there, and not a trace of Mathews. The intruder looked dumbfounded. Was he going mad? Was the place bewitched? or what? He muttered something under his breath and, with a look of fear and wonder on his face, hurried out of the shop.

Poor little Mathews! It must have been a wrench leaving that place in Vigo Street. I saw him years afterwards—not long before he died—in a spacious shop in Cork Street. There he was with his books, which he loved so well and knew so much about. He showed me some of his latest publications, for he still went in for publishing—principally poetry, in limited editions produced with excellent taste. But somehow he didn't seem happy. Perhaps he had no cellar to hide in, and felt himself at the mercy of the world. But even if he had had a cellar, I don't think he would have retired to it to avoid *me*. I used to like Mathews. It was perhaps a fellow feeling, for I too was shy; especially with women. And I have reason to think that Mathews liked me—good reason. He once *gave* me a book!

THE LAST OF MR. LAMMETER

THERE was an air of shabby gentility about Mr. Lammeter. His clothes were much worn, but they were well brushed and neat, for he was a careful man and a stickler for appearances. In the summer (one rarely saw him in the winter) he wore a "boater" at a slightly rakish tilt, and a buff-coloured waistcoat. Indeed, his annual reappearance in those familiar articles of attire was evidence that the warmer days had come again. During the war, a bomb from a German aeroplane had dropped in his vicinity as he was coming home from the City, and one of the splinters had caught him in the stomach. The wound was a ghastly one. But they took him off to the hospital and patched him up, and gradually nursed him back to life. This misfortune was really not such a misfortune as it seemed, for it gave Mr. Lammeter a status which, as a humble shop-assistant, he had hitherto lacked. Not every man had suffered as he had

suffered. Not every man had had his entrails torn and lacerated as he had. It invested him with a sort of proud pre-eminence of woe. He felt somehow that he had "done his bit," and the consciousness that he had suffered like the men at the Front brought him a feeling of satisfaction. *Decus et solamen*. It set him up in his own esteem and gave an authoritative ring to his voice as he passed the time of day with you in the street.

But Mr. Lammeter was poor. He did no work. That could hardly be expected of a man who had been partially disembowelled by a shell. He did no work, but lived at home, in lodgings, with his widowed mother, who was very old and a chronic invalid. Mrs. Lammeter indeed was dying, but as she had been dying for the last twenty years, no one could predict with certainty how much longer the end would be delayed. The doctor having many times announced, during the last five years, that she couldn't last out the week, had grown wary, and had now taken to wagging his head and saying with an air of owlsh wisdom, "Well, it's difficult to tell in these cases. She might go off any moment, or she might hang on indefinitely." But Mr. Lammeter was growing impatient. The little income, which was barely sufficient for the two of them, seeing all the delicacies—grapes, meat-extract, chicken-broth, brandy and so forth—that had to be bought for the invalid, would be affluence

for him when he would only have himself to keep. He saw himself in a brand-new serge suit, walking along the front at Hastings, and walking with an air, for he was not like other men: he had had his entrails shot away by a shell. And he would, of course, sit in a shelter and tell his chance acquaintance all about it.

But Mrs. Lammeter still lived on. The winter came and went, and with the returning spring her strength seemed to revive. Her son tended her carefully, and when she was querulous, as aged invalids are wont to be, he bore her reproaches quite meekly and said nothing. He would have been indignant if anyone had said that he wanted her to die. He did not say that even to himself. He only said, when people asked for his mother, "She can't last much longer now." And then he would add vaguely, as if thinking aloud, "What a difference it'll be when she is gone!" No doubt he saw himself in that blue serge suit seated at breakfast in the boarding-house at Hastings, with the sun sparkling on the dancing waters; and heard the other lodgers whispering to each other, "That is Mr. Lammeter. He was hit by a bomb during an air-raid and terribly injured."

One day, Mr. Lammeter thought he would go up to the City and look at the place where he was walking when the bomb caught him. There were one or two odds-and-ends he wanted. He would be able to get them wholesale up there—a tie or two, some collars, and some summer

underwear. Mr. Lammeter, having been "in the soft goods," always talked about "underwear," "neckwear," "summer wear," and so on.

He made his purchases, had his lunch in a tea-shop, and was crossing the street, when he was knocked down by a motor-omnibus, which he did not see because his head was full of all the things he intended to do when . . .

They took him to the hospital, but when they got him there, he was dead. To have survived this second misfortune would have been too much. It would have made him too proud.

When the landlady at the lodgings went upstairs to break the news to his mother, she got no answer. Mrs. Lammeter had gone to join her son.

SARAH

I DID not even know that Sarah was ill. When, therefore, a letter came one morning from her step-son, to say that she was dead, it seemed strange, incredible, for we had never been wont to take leave of each other so abruptly. The end had come suddenly. She had been feeling weak and tired, it seemed, for some time past, and her cheerfulness had deserted her; but neither she nor her friends had suspected the existence of the deep-seated malady that carried her away so swiftly at the last. Slowly, as the weeks went by, I began to realise what her departure meant to me. It meant a great deal, it meant a great part of my life, and if I grieved for her that she had been taken away from the light of day, I grieved also for myself, and I tried to live over again the life that I had lived with her. And I wondered whether, in the regions to which she had departed, she thought of me and of all the adventures we had had together—she and I.

I suppose she must have been about seventeen, and I about five, when we stayed together at Cleverdon. That, as I think I have explained, was the house of my great-uncle Eusebius, the doctor, on the far north-western border of Devon, on the fringe of the moors. Sarah and I were allowed to drive about the lanes in the donkey-butt. Sarah drove, sitting up on the wooden plank that rested on the two sides of the cart, jogging the reins, which were of rope, about as thick as a clothes-line. I sat on the straw, which plentifully covered the bottom. The cart had no springs, and the lanes, which abounded in loose stones, usually had two deep grass-fringed cart-ruts on either side. The space between the ruts was free from grass, being worn clean by the hoofs of the horses; and the stones, brought from the quarries round about, were usually of a greyish pink. The stone-breaker, seated on his heap of rough-hewn granite, wearing goggles to protect his eyes from flying chips, was a familiar figure on the grass that edged the high-road, chipping away interminably with his hammer at the chunks of granite.

Well, I wondered if Sarah had taken with her the memory of that morning when, as we were jolting along home from Bradworthy—"Braddery Town" they used to call it—jolting slowly along in the shadow of the tall hedgerows, with the sunlight flooding the fields, Death, in the shape of Farmer Cory's bull, suddenly looked

at us through a gap in the hedge. At least, Sarah said it was Farmer Cory's bull, and, indeed, the beast gave vent to a prolonged series of reverberating and most alarming bellows, and brandished its tail in the manner popularly associated with disaffected bulls. In this it was perfectly justified, for I was wearing my red pelisse, the red pelisse of which I was so proud, but which, it seemed, was likely to prove our undoing. Sarah recognised this, and promptly tore it off me, stuffing it with what speed she might beneath the straw. But the bull, unappeased by this concession, this striking of our colours, went on swinging his tail, and bellowing with a violence that seemed to make the earth tremble. Sarah then addressed herself to the donkey, who was the only one of the party to remain unperturbed.

Jack, such was the donkey's name, was grey in colour, with a line of black along the spine—and very obdurate. Sarah must have learned from long experience the uselessness of hitting him. Even a double bastinado carried out by Sarah and myself upon his patient buttocks rarely had any effect upon his pace except to retard it. But the crisis was acute, and with the energy of terror and despair, Sarah applied her stick to his posterior, not so much belabouring him, as stoking him up, as though he were the kitchen fire, and frantically jogging the reins. At length we turned a corner, out of sight. The bellowings continued; but they grew fainter.

Evidently the bull was not following us. We breathed again. The stable-boys laughed, and said it was not a bull at all, but just a cow lowing for her lost calf ; but Sarah said she knew better. I held my peace, not as yet being competent to pronounce an opinion on such matters.

Sarah was my friend, my champion, who stood between the world and me. Most of my play-fellows were the children of well-to-do business men. There was Edward : his people were connected with the Stock Exchange. And Bertie, whose father, then an alderman, became Lord Mayor of London. The presents they had were costly and elaborate ; but then, I had Sarah, and Sarah, by dint of industry and ingenuity, would see to it that I was "up sides" with my plutocratic rivals. She had the waywardness of genius, and she would sacrifice everything to the interest of the moment. My mother used to say that she had no method, and I am afraid that was true. She would leave the routine work till the last, let it accumulate, and then fling herself into it with heroic zeal, doing at eleven o'clock at night what should have been done at eleven in the morning. But then, in the interim, she would have stuck together the broken pieces of my magic-lantern slides, encased my school books in linen covers, improved the accommodation of my rabbits, trimmed a hat for herself, thought out a plan for constructing railway lines for my toy engine, to rival those which Bertie's mother had bought

for him at the stores. What wonder, then, if some of the mere routine domestic work had to be postponed?

It must not be supposed, however, that we never quarrelled. We loved each other far too well to live in a condition of perpetual peace. It is only the mutually indifferent who can do that. Our quarrels were fierce—but they were brief. The reconciliation was accompanied by a ritual which usually included the making and eating of toffee. Brown sugar and butter, melted in a saucepan over the kitchen fire, garnished, if we could find any, with almonds, poured out into a flat dish to cool, and marked off into little squares like a chess-board—this we would eat together in solemn silence—it was, as it were, our pipe of peace. *Amantium irae amoris redintegratio est.* They are the little discords that make the resultant harmony more sweet.

But Time, alas, will not stand still, and nothing, as Heraclitus sadly noted, is stable in this world. I began to grow up. My voice broke. I went to a big school, and came back of an evening with homework, in which Sarah's collaboration, though well intentioned, was unavailing. She could make a rabbit hutch; but to put "Balbus was building a wall" into Latin was beyond her.

I don't know how many years she had been with us—it must have been more than thirty—when she decided she would become a monthly

nurse, that is to say a midwife. She left us to train at a lying-in hospital, paying her expenses out of the money she had saved from her wages. She obtained her diploma, and soon became greatly in request among expectant mothers. But at last she married a widower, an ex-naval carpenter, with three grown-up children. He had a little shop in a back street somewhere off the Holloway Road, from which he dispensed newspapers, tobacco, toffee-apples, fire-wood, coal-blocks, and other miscellaneous merchandise to a no less miscellaneous clientèle. It was lucrative, but it was hard work. And Sarah was not a business woman. The love which she had focused on me was now poured out on all the little urchins of the neighbourhood.

Sarah had a way of insinuating little extra packets of tea or sugar, or such commodities, into the baskets of the little children who came to do the shopping for their mothers. Not that she was foolish or indiscriminating in her good deeds. Not by any means. She was very shrewd, and an excellent judge of character, but in cases which she knew to be deserving there was no limit to her charity.

The back parlour, where Mr. Leaf, the ex-naval carpenter, entertained me with rum and British cigars, was shut off from the shop by a glazed door veiled with a lace curtain adorned with a broad ribbon of red satin. He told yarns of his seafaring days in a low rumbling monotone, but so long were his stories, and so incessant the

interruptions, that I never could make out what they were about. Sarah seemed to look upon them as a sort of obbligate, and as no more of a hindrance to the exercise of her own conversational powers than the buzzing of a humble-bee. Mr. Leaf was an easy-going man, and took no offence at this. If no one listened to him, that was not his fault. He at least had done *his* part of the business.

When I heard that Sarah was dead, I felt chilly and grown old. The sort of feeling you get on the threshold of autumn, when the swallows have gone, and you feel the first touch of frost in the air.

EPILOGUE

AS I turn the leaves of this little sheaf of memories, I confess that I am not wholly free from misgiving. Who will take even a passing interest in such trifles? A few, perhaps, who know me, and who knew some of the people and scenes I have attempted to portray. But the multitude, the great public,—these, I fear, if they deign to glance at all at such *nugae*, will do so with a cold and a disdainful eye. What can it signify to the world at large that, to call back my mother from the shades into which she vanished I scarce know how many years since, I have but to remember how the sea-wind set her veil a-flutter as we lowered the window at Instow (whence you may look towards Lundy and the setting sun) to let a little air into our stuffy railway-carriage? What can it matter that, long ago, a little boy with puny arms rowed in his boat the livelong day about the Bideford river, and was happy? Yet, as often as not, it is

trifles such as these, shreds of memory light as thistledown, frail as gossamer, that conjure up, as by enchantment, a whole vanished world to our inward eye, conjure it up with such vividness that we are tempted to wonder whether the Past be not the reality, and what we call the living Present no more than a dream, or the shadow of a dream.

